Ministry in Secular Employment (MSE) in the Church of England, 1960-2000

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An investigation into how MSE has evolved between 1960 and 2000 and the narratives generated, to illuminate facets of the ecclesiology that have interfaced with the concurrent socio-cultural context

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Abstract

Introduction

The study was undertaken to examine two issues. The first was to determine the development track of Ministry in Secular Employment between 1960 and 2000 with associated strategy and policy intentions in the Church of England for ordained ministers. The second was to use the material collected to examine the ecclesiology and socio-cultural context that had underpinned the decisions about MSE.

Methods

An archive was generated between 2005 and 2011 that identified materials across the research period that included interviews, memoirs, surveys and personal communications. Using narrative, contextual and grounded theology approaches, individual narratives of those in MSE were examined to illuminate both the nature of the role fulfilled and the institution in which it was based. A focus for this process was Castells' notion of the 'space of flows', using it as a crystal to determine the relevance of the archive in studying the ecclesiology of the Church of England in that period.

Results

The years 1960-1970 initiated a period of profound socio-cultural change. In this period also emerged MSE. Analysis of the process identified that the experimental start to the initiative had not been embedded into the structure and strategy of the church, while being well embedded into the culture and structures of the worlds in which the Ministers in Secular Employment lived and worked. The church adopted a homeostatic approach to this development characterised by dioceses and their bishops acting independently. MSE had not been explored for its potential in the field of mission or cultural integration of church and society. The church continues to understand its mission and purpose in terms of stipendiary parish priests to the exclusion of nearly all other options.

Discussion

While MSE has not developed to the degree its early pioneers had hoped, it is still practised in church life and therefore has potential for the future. Further research in several related fields has been identified.

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Introduction

There is a remarkable omission in recent histories of the Church of England and its ordained ministry; they do not mention the emergence of Ministry in Secular Employment (MSE)[1,2]. This speaks volumes about the lack of focus on one of the most important developments in recent church history. Not only is there an apparent ignorance about the development and its significance, it points to an understanding of the church and its culture which is isolated from the cultural context of the society the church exists to serve. MSE was established at a particular juncture in social and church cultural change. It acts as an insight into those profound changes. The failure to fully develop MSE and integrate into new thinking about the needs of the church raises questions about the manner in which bishops, as heads of the diocesan structure of the church of England, make decisions and determine the way of life in their patches. This study examines the ecclesiology implicit in that pattern of decision-making and the impact on those who are on the receiving end.

The emergence of the first ordained modern worker priests in the 1960s did not occur *ex nihilo* and without commensurate socio-cultural changes to prompt and stimulate the development. This research project aims to identify the development track of this movement, the challenges it faced and some of the gaps in the story between 1960 and 2000. To some degree these are arbitrary dates; however, many of the church's policy decisions concerning this development occurred from 1960 onwards, though based on changes that had a history of a century or more in some circumstances. The year 2000 marked the celebration of the completion of the second Christian millennium, and while developments and changes in the concept of worker priest did not end at that point, it provides a forty-year time frame to contextualise the phenomenon within and to be able to view it with the added hindsight of a further decade or so of developments. However, this is not

[1] (Furlong 2000)
[2] (Reiss 2013)

simply a recounting of the history of the initiative, but a study in the ecclesiology that has shaped the developments.

The temptation is to undertake this work by investigating the Church of England and recounting the debates and papers issued on the subject while using interviews of worker priests garnered during this period to give it some human colour. To do so would obscure the greater issue of how decision-making occurs in an institution like the church, and unintentionally deny the significance of the socio-cultural framework within which the church exists. This introduction provides a brief account of some of the key social and cultural influences during this period, as well as the extent of the church's agenda with the intention of exploring something much more significant about the church, i.e. how it responds to the need to make challenging decisions while attempting to fulfil what it perceives to be its historic responsibilities as the established church.

The socio-cultural changes in England will be addressed to some degree in later chapters; however, adopting a newsreel approach at this point helps to contextualise how certain historic events remained in the social consciousness in ways that others did not. For instance, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the assassination of John F Kennedy typified the decade of the 1960s in which the Cold War came to dominate international political life, with NATO confronting the Warsaw Pact across the Berlin Wall. This could not be said for the birth of the European Economic Community, even though it was to have a more lasting effect on the shaping and developing of Europe. In the East, the pursuit of the Maoist revolution in China and the war in Vietnam shaped daily awareness. The world appeared threatened and the uncertainty left over from the end of World War II sustained social anxiety about the future. The revolutions of the 1960s in Latin America, famine in India and the Biafran War in Nigeria, as well as the loss of Empire experienced by several Western powers, all added to the sense of international insecurity when viewed from a British perspective. Other events like the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr and the Six Day War in Israel were occurrences that lived long in the memory, especially as they set a tone of 'what

next'? Perhaps most remarkable of all was watching the Apollo 11 moon landing and being presented with a new era of technological achievement. In church terms, this was the era in which the fall in Sunday church attendance became an issue and the public image of the church was satirised along with many of the other national institutions. In some sense however, it also marked the end of a long period of church promoted social change with the church speaking out in support of many of the changes promoted during this decade.

In a sense the 1970s saw more of the same, but the nature of memorable international events began to change. The war that led to the creation of Bangladesh reversed previous international agreements on the unity of East and West Pakistan. Plane hijackings became a frequent tool of revolt and negotiation, as did hostage taking and assassinations, with the story of the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics perhaps being the most noteworthy. The Middle East came to dominate international politics from a Western perspective with the first of the international oil crises as oil rich Arab countries began to exercise leverage against the West. This culminated in the taking of the American hostages in Iran, resulting in a major statement about how international negotiation and military influence was changing. The European Community continued to expand, absorbing the UK among others, and for the first time the UK had a female prime minister. Church attendance continued to decline in this decade and with it the church began to lose its position of national influence. Levels of recruitment to ordination training centres began to fall markedly, as did entry into the religious life. The church adopted a synodic form of governance and acknowledged for the first time the need to listen in a structured way to the voice of the laity. Ecclesiologically, leadership was becoming more diverse.

The overwhelming public memory of the 1980s is probably the fall of the Berlin wall toward the end of the decade. However, before that, assassinations had come to dominate public awareness as never before. There were attempted assassinations on both the Pope and the Queen in the same year, and John Lennon and Indira Ghandi were assassinated, both having been immense public

figures. The Falkland Islands were invaded and then defended and a plane was exploded over the Scottish town of Lockerbie. Changes in Central Europe became more marked with the overthrow of the Ceausescus in Romania and attempts at greater liberality in China were quashed in Tiananmen Square. However, perhaps even more significant was the exposure of technological frailties with the Bhopal gas leak, the explosion of a space shuttle and the destruction of the Chernobyl nuclear facility during an experiment on cooling of atomic rods. The atomic fall-out from this event was to effect numerous countries from Ukraine and the Baltic westwards. It underlined the interrelatedness of the world in a way that had not previously been easily comprehended. In this decade of major change in Europe, church attendance continued to fall, as did the uptake of occasional services like baptism and confirmation. The church developed a political critique of government policy and in particular, how it affected the poor, elderly and less able. This placed the church in a position commensurate with liberation theology but antipathetic to the political force of the day

The 1990s confirmed the trend of international interrelatedness. The decade started with the final collapse of the Soviet Union and of apartheid in South Africa, both after extensive and concerted international campaigns. Linkages were further developed by the opening up of the internet (an invisible phenomenon) and the Channel Tunnel (a very concrete one), in both cases enabling movement and exchange in previously unimagined ways. Technology opened more new doors with the cloning of the first sheep, something that was to stimulate the race for the first complete human genome and all the potential that that represented. The Euro was launched as a new international currency in order to unite Europe further just at the time that the bloodiest European conflict since 1945 was being fought out in the former Yugoslavia. The decline in church numbers continued, as the church ordained its first women priests and debates about gays in the church and about the discipline of clergy began to take centre stage.

This short overview of the four decades suggests items that might be remembered by someone asked what was in the news headlines between 1960 and the year

2000. Individual and national differences of foci have not been addressed because the main focus is the public awareness in the UK of various events as cultural background to the development of Ministry in Secular Employment. The changes were influenced by increased personal spending, technical innovations available at a price that the great majority of people could afford, and a final break between living and working in the same neighbourhood, even as significantly increased numbers of women entered the workforce. Individualism and the concomitant choices had emerged in a commercial setting that spread into the work and leisure settings. Social compulsion to comply diminished and this is perhaps best reflected in the flower power movement and the accessibility of new types of contraceptives at the beginning of the period in question. The range of personal freedoms had expanded in unimagined ways.

For the Church of England and worker priests, this was an era in which new responses were demanded to previously unencountered phenomena; the challenge was therefore an ecclesiological one. The new individualism, wealth and community changes all pointed to the need for the church to find new ways of being church. The challenges arose because like so many institutions its *modi operandi* were based on its experience of the past rather than its strategic planning for the future. The change process was made more complex by a lack of mechanisms for prioritising decision-making, and therefore the time for effecting reform was further dissipated by a wish to give equal time to everyone who raised issues and a failure to take time to identify those issues that facilitated adaptation to the future.

In this period, the church was forced to address several major issues, all of which in different ways reflected the wider social changes. The dominant one is the falling numbers of attendance at church services. The multiplicity of reasons for this are beyond the scope of this study. After a revival in attendance figures in the 1950s, the fall has been continuous throughout the era under study, despite the arrival of Anglican immigrants from many parts of the world. In many cases such individuals were not welcomed into the traditional, all white English churches. The

nature of church attendance also changed with the Parish Communion movement finally winning a battle started in the 1930s, thus making the service of Holy Communion the principal Sunday worship instead of Matins or Evensong. The church responded to the fall in attendance numbers with numerous initiatives from industrial chaplaincy to ‘cell churches’, ‘fresh expressions’ and ‘messy church’, but with little impact. Another continuous feature of church life has been the rise of new church liturgies culminating first in the Alternative Service Book (1980) and then Common Worship (2000), presenting a whole portfolio of liturgies.

During this era of this study, the church was impacted by initiatives in other churches. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) stimulated much debate about what it meant to be church and stimulated thinking about ecumenism. In that same decade the discussions about a covenant with Methodists also progressed before being rejected by the Church of England. In parallel with these debates the publication of *Honest to God* by John Robinson brought theology into the public space, creating a more general understanding of how theology had developed in the previous half century. Also during this time, a greater awareness of differences in churchmanship developed. Catholic practice in the Church of England was judged on how ‘high up the candle’ a parish might be; the charismatic parishes were described as ‘happy clappy’; and evangelical churches began to focus much more on the gathered congregation and membership. The relationships between the different traditions were not always good and were to come to a head in the debates about the role of women in ordained ministry.

Such debates first started in the Church assembly, but from 1970 the new General Synod structure came into place and this synodical governance was to be the mechanism within which the subsequent decision-making was to occur. All church traditions had concerns about women in church ministry, especially in ordained ministry. If any issue was to dominate church life through these four decades and beyond, it was the question of permitting women access to holy orders. Equally, if anything was to confuse the general public about the Church of England, it was its attitude to women. The debate about ordination became increasingly public and

rancorous during the period and it was not until 1987 that the first women deacons were ordained and in 1994 the first women priests. It was at this point that a significant number of Anglican priests left the Church of England to seek positions in the Roman Catholic Church. The debate about women in ordained ministry continued into the twenty-first century as attempts were made to establish a legal process for the ordination of women bishops.

If the debate about women in ordained ministry had created much heat and little light, the same could be said about homosexuality. The public were confused about what the church was doing with this issue in the light of how far public opinion had changed. The church struggled in particular with the position of homosexual clergy, especially as civil licensing for gay relationship was being introduced. It made the church look out of touch with issues of human sexuality and as if it had an unhealthy interest in what was taking place in people's bedrooms. These debates undermined the work done by the church in other fields, especially concerning poverty where it had spoken effectively to the nation.

This newsreel-type summary of historical events and church activities provides the backdrop for the arrival of the new worker priests. The church, having to address major social change and unprecedented expectations about ordained and public ministry, was ill prepared for the challenges of public scrutiny and demands for transparency in decision-making. Ironically, the ministers best equipped to meet these new expectations were usually the worker priests who had learnt to utilise the new technologies in their work places and grown used to the demands for public accountability. Given the size of the agenda to be addressed, and the limited resources and experience available, it is perhaps no wonder that the church did not integrate the modern worker priests into ministry as thoroughly and rapidly as it might. However, examining what happened to this group of individuals illuminates the way of working of the church and the assumptions and beliefs that underpinned it. The difficulty experienced in drawing the story together is itself informative and the individual accounts help to explain the nature of the ecclesiology that they encountered. Given the degree of change in socio-cultural

practice, this review earths the worker priests in the context of a social and cultural *terroir*, from which it is possible to examine the growth of such ministry. In doing so, the research becomes a study in ecclesiology, an examination of the church that fostered such a growth but has yet to determine what this fruit of worker priest means in terms of the harvest of its mission and ministry.

Chapter 1

Survey of the subject and related literature

> *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.* (Genesis 1. 3-5, King James Version)

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Setting the scene

This is a study into the emergence of a particular group of ordained priests in the Anglican tradition. What motivated the study is a question about how this initiative developed and resulted in a cadre of priests known as Ministers in Secular Employment (MSEs). Familiarity with and knowledge based on the examination of particular tensions pointed to the normative role of ordained priests in parochial ministry as set against the experience of priests who see their ministry as being in ordinary (secular) workplaces. This tension can be explored in a number of ways. It is possible to ask what the role of ordained ministers is if all people share in priesthood through baptism: the priesthood of all believers (1Pet. 2.9). Alternatively, one can explore the change in urbanisation that has shifted the focus of daily life from a place to the use of time: a temporalisation of society. The first act of creation described in the Bible is the creation of time (day and night). The story then describes the process by which humans developed until, as Abraham's story relates, they have become settled. This puts an emphasis on place that has remained until the modern era. Central to the pattern of urbanisation, especially in what is often described as the 'First world', including the UK over the last fifty years, has been the development of life styles, including work and leisure, where the critical issue is time and not place. This has gone hand in hand with a marked secularisation of society. It is in this context that the strangeness of the modern priestly roles is to be examined.

When John Mantle stated at the end of his study *Britain's First Worker Priests* that:

> *Though they came from middle- (very occasionally upper-) class backgrounds, with no pretence that they could themselves become working-class, they were at least ready to share that life and, sometimes, to make its hardships known to others. ...there is also a growing understanding of the enormous gulf between institutional religion on the one hand and the understanding and culture of ordinary working people on the other*. (Mantle 2000, p. 271) [3]

and:

> *There are, of course, some that continue to strive for a ministry at work. Though they have not been mentioned very often in this study, it is vital to acknowledge the life, work and theology of ministers in secular employment, one group at least who have tried to keep this ministry alive.* (Mantle 2000 p. 274)

Mantle is drawing attention to a phenomenon 'below the radar' of ecclesiological investigation; what for want of a better term can be described as the modern worker priest. It is a development that has occurred on a permissive basis and with little strategic direction or policy framework. As the balance of stipendiary and non-stipendiary licensed Anglican priests continues to shift, with ever more priests falling into the latter category, questions begin to arise about the nature of this development and its significance in terms of the church, both structurally and from the perspective of the society, which it is committed to serve. It is difficult to believe that this major shift in the balance of the ordained ministerial supply has occurred without it being the intended aim of some long-term goal or vision, and without consequential or subsidiary changes being planned to occur in parallel. This study, based on an archive drawn from these modern worker priests, demonstrates that this serendipitous development has occurred without major review or high-level organisational intent.

When John Fuller and Patrick Vaughan undertook research, which eventually appeared in their book *Working for the Kingdom,*[4] they recorded a number of interviews that were never transcribed. I have been given access to the audio t**a**pes of the interviews through the kindness of Dr Patrick Vaughan, and despite their age, there was only a moderate degree of deterioration in the tapes. Twenty-

[3] (Mantle 2000)
[4] (Fuller and Vaughan 1986b)

five of the original thirty-two tapes had been transcribed, at least in part. These interviews give a picture of a cross-section of worker priests based in the South-West of England and the Midlands as they reflected on the experience of their ordained roles in 1983-4. Several of the interviews were done with small groups, thus extending the range of consultation slightly. This resource is supplemented by a publication that started in February 1982 as *A Newsletter among Priests-at-Work and Others Concerned*. It continues to the present, but is now known as *Ministers-at-Work: The Journal for Christians in Secular Ministry*. July 2014 saw its 129th edition. This publication has carried accounts of the experience of being a worker priest throughout its time and is therefore an invaluable resource. Also, as part of her preparation for priesthood, Ann Templeman undertook a thesis focused on priests who were headmasters, which has been used in this present study. The contents of both sets of interviews have been fully transcribed for the first time, illuminating a traditional role for priests in the modern era. Finally, I have accumulated a number of memoirs and personal accounts, including from people who have been ministered to by worker priests. Much of this latter category has arrived unsolicited as news of the present study spread informally. That of itself is not without significance. Together these items provide a comprehensive resource to begin to examine what this development means for the church.

1.1.2 The size of the issue

There are several ways of quantifying the beginning of this second generation of worker priests as an issue. The simplest and most direct method is to examine the data available on the number of licensed priests in the categories used by Church House. The statistics available in *The Church of England Year Book* (p. xli)[5] demonstrates what to many people is a surprising change. The statistics tell a fascinating, if challenging story. Of the 18,173 active licensed clergy in 2007, 9,367 (51.5%) consist of non-stipendiary clergy, chaplains and other sectoral ministries, and retired priests still active in ministry. This is in contrast to the 8,808 (48.5%) licensed stipendiary ministers. Of these stipendiary ministers, a number

[5] (Archbishop's Council 2008)

are in senior positions in dioceses and unattached to direct parish ministry. These are known in the Church of England's statistics as 'Dignitaries'. The time is approaching, if it has not already arrived, when parish priests remain the single largest identifiable group, but it is no longer the only role available to those entering ordained ministry. Further, it is clear that the balance between the traditional ministry of the parish priest and the other ordained ministries is shifting.

1.1.3 An ecclesiological concern

Ecclesiology is the study of the church, the cultural and theological response it makes to the world it seeks to serve. A number of disciplines are needed to illuminate the function and purposes of the structures and processes church, the nature of its beliefs and the actuality of its change over time. This quasi definition is based on Daniel Hardy's description of Church (in Hastings *et al*, pp 118-21).[6] Ecclesiology can therefore be examined through a number of different perspectives including the nature of espoused beliefs, variety of worship patterns, practices of congregations, socio-cultural change, and indeed the nature of its ordained priesthood. Each topic opens different academic disciplines for application to the problem. Each topic (and others) offers a prism for opening the nature of the organisation in terms of its own standpoint. Examining the church from the point of view of its worship patterns will describe one angle and aspect of its life, but also enable commentary on, and observation about, the wider institution. The same applies to examination of a sub-group of ordained ministers. Of themselves they offer issues of interest in terms of organisation and local practice. When examining the nature of the Church from the basis of their experience of ministry, a diagonal slice through the structure and processes of the life of the Church emerges, enabling analysis and criticism of the revealed scenario to be made.

A further consequence of using this approach offers the opportunity to examine how the church is or is not changing in its role in society. This is complex, if not

[6] (Hastings et al. 2000)

impossible to carry out without an explicit focus or particular starting point. The global nature of the church in its range of manifestations suggests a matrix type of organisation rather than one determined by a managerial structure. Indeed, the metaphor of the body, used so often in church literature, offers a more realistic framework for grasping the nature of this institution. It is often illuminative therefore to compare theological statements about the body of the church with the science of the human body. It provides one insight in an organisation lacking defining parameters, including the absence of a membership list in what is essentially a voluntary organisation. It was essential therefore to adopt a particular focus to see what such an examination from that perspective would reveal. The rise of the modern worker priest is an example of the unstructured way in which change emerges and is integrated without a strategic boardroom-type of approach, characteristic of many organisations. The focus of this thesis is therefore the worker priest as a way of identifying the ecclesiology of the church which led to their creation and subsequent usage. Using the fact of MSE, it is possible to be both critical and generous about the formation the church gives to its ministers in secular employment. The questions to be addressed are about the structures of the church and what implications this has for the roles agreed and functions expected to be fulfilled. The aim therefore is to examine the experience of individuals working in secular employment in the hope that something about the nature of this institution will be illuminated, and the way it develops and changes in the complexity of the post-modern world.

1.2 The current scenario

1.2.1 Old style worker priests

It is popular to assert that there have always been worker priests in the Church. Saint Paul is identified as the archetype, having been a tentmaker who worked to support himself while undertaking his ministry (Acts 18.3). This is explored in depth by Ronald Hock who in reviewing both biblical sources and contemporaneous classical writing demonstrates how Paul’s work a tentmaker

was integral to his evangelistic activities (pp.67-8).[7] More directly pertinent to this study is the history of secular priests, (i.e. priests not belonging to religious orders) in England who appear from time immemorial to have engaged in a range of activities to enhance their tithes, according to N J G Pounds (pp.157-181).[8] Even in Victorian times priests supplemented their income by teaching, chaplaincy and farming. The stipended priests are therefore a comparatively modern development and something of a novelty in terms of the long history of the Church. However, the breach with the past had been long and strong enough to create the French *prêtres ouvriers* in the post-war era a significant event.

Documents produced anonymously but translated by John Petrie[9] made the French *prêtres ouvriers* better known to the English speaking world from the mid-1950s onwards. This initiative had been stimulated by developments in Belgium and France prior to the Second World War. The central concern was that an increasing number of people were not encountering the church and in response to this a few bishops approved a limited number of men to engage more directly with people in the world of work. This was promoted more actively during the War as priests moved with their parishioners when they were deported as labour to Germany. In order not to be identified as priests, they became fellow workers. Henri Perrin was the leading figure in this development in the immediate post-war era until the suppression of what was known as the *Mission de France* in 1953.[10] This suppression was exercised from Rome and lasted until 1965 when it was lifted under very stringent conditions. A small number of priests have continued in that role in France ever since.

As the suppression was being implemented in France, there was a small but significant parallel development in the United Kingdom, where a number of priests were modelling being a priest in the world of work. The major study in this field is

[7] (Hock 1980)
[8] (Pounds 2000)
[9] (Les Prêtres Ouvriers 1954)
[10] (Perrin 1958)

by John Mantle.[11] In referring to them as 'Britain's First Worker Priests', he identified the generational shift that was to occur over a very short period of time. By 1970 their numbers were no longer increasing. Disagreements in the group itself had led to a certain dissipation of the originally shared vision. Yet also by 1970 the second generation of worker priests were emerging, and their links with their predecessors both in terms of origin and focus, was tenuous.

1.2.2 Mantle's analysis

Mantle starts by identifying a common confusion:

> *The popular notion, however, that can derive from such juxtapositions – that non-stipendiary ministries are simply a kind of derivative of French worker-priests –illustrates a fundamental misunderstanding of worker-priests in France and, more significantly, those who gave themselves to the ministry in Britain.* (Mantle 2000 p. 2*)*

Mantle points to a lack of clarity about the different roles of priests who work for a living. He offers his own definition:

> *... the strands that led to non-stipendiary ministry weave something of a tangled web, and if there was thought to be a logical or inevitable step from worker-priests to the development of such ministries, worker-priests did not always share it. In practice, Britain's first worker-priests had much more in common with their counterparts in France; they were theologically well-educated and conventionally trained clergy, 'priests turned workers', who had resolved, as a priestly vocation, to live and work alongside their fellow men and women in manual labour.* (Mantle 2000 p. 3)

There is much here to consider. Mantle is identifying a group of people who had first felt their calling to an ordained ministry in one of the conventional priestly roles. They had gone through the selection process and been approved by their bishops with that model in mind. Subsequently they had begun their ordained priestly lives in parish settings. Mantle then recounts the journeys they travelled as they discerned a further calling to the world of work, undertaking manual labour. This latter point is important because it speaks of perceptions about the Church of England's failing to engage with a social class from which its priests generally did not come. This concern was to emerge much more strongly in the development of

[11] (Mantle 2000)

industrial missions.[12] This comparatively small group of the first worker priests (no definitive figure has ever been agreed, but Mantle's estimate is a 'handful'[13]) were theologically well prepared. However, in ecclesiological terms they were prepared for parish work. Their commitment was not just to any sort of paid employment, but specifically to manual work, intent on avoiding promotion to management positions despite the offers that many of them inevitably had, suggesting strong parallels with the *prêtres ouvriers*. Some priests did advance to be shop stewards and indeed sat on trade union and local authority committees because of the support that they elicited from their colleagues in the workplace. However, the real pressure, because of their education and training, was not to advance through the management structure of the organisations in which they worked. This was resisted.

Mantle summarises some of the problems this group faced from an institutional perspective:

> *For generations the territorial parish had been viewed as the only proper context for mission and ministry – the only way of being church – and the handful of worker-priests, and some industrial chaplains, who believed otherwise, were voices crying in the wind. Rather, the institution, which implicitly refused the worker-priests recognition, threw its weight behind the burgeoning non-stipendiary ministries, especially where these supported the parochial system, and where participants remained in middle-class and professional occupations, occasionally appropriating the title 'worker-priest' or 'priest-worker' for themselves.* (Mantle 2000 p. 4*)* [14]

Key here is the semantic transference of the title 'worker-priest' from those who resembled the French *prêtres ouvriers* most closely, to those who came from a different background (middle-class and professional) and with a different motivation. The significant observation that Mantle makes is that they were seen to be prepared to work in support of the parish, i.e. the normative framework for church life in the Church of England. It puts into focus the distinction that Mantle was to make later about the differing modes of ordained priesthood that the

[12] (Wickham 1959)
[13] (Mantle 2002)
[14] (Mantle 2000)

Church of England had fostered, but not distinctly encouraged or integrated actively into its organisational framework. It points to passivity in the organisation, which confounds those looking for reasons and decision-making frameworks for specific developments.

1.2.3 Problems of Definition

This study concentrates on examining the experience of one particular group of non-stipendiary ministers, that is, those who might be more accurately described as Ministers in Secular Employment (MSEs). In seeking to determine the features of this group of ministers, the intention is to identify what can be learnt from the history of the role performance, and what the future policy significance of this role may be. It is difficult to identify any formal policy evaluation commissioned by the Church of England on the subject. There are several reports from Church House and Synod that give a degree of account of change and development[15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22]. These documents reveal the lack of an organisational policy framework. Any in-depth analysis is difficult to track down. That which has been identified, i.e. the reported experience of priests in these new roles, has often been ignored, or at least marginalised. One question that underpins this study is therefore, why is the reported experiences of individuals ignored when there is a policy void in the Church of England?

The two processes of ignoring data and marginalising analysis have been a central influence on the development of the methodologies for this study. In common with other less well-established professions e.g. nursing, there seems to be a distinct aversion to studies undertaken by ‘outsiders’ i.e. those outside the

[15](Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry 1968)
[16] (Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry 1984)
[17] (Advisory Board of Ministry 1991)
[18] (Advisory Board of Ministry 1992)
[19] (Advisory Board of Ministry 1993)
[20] (Advisory Board of Ministry 1994)
[21] (Advisory Board of Ministry 1996)
[22] (Advisory Board of Ministry 1998)

church hierarchy or its structures[23,24,25,26]. As a result, some studies undertaken in more purely academic arenas, which might have had the potential to influence decision-making about the deployment and integration of MSEs, have not been actively addressed. The implications of this will be considered as part of this study, especially as a number of non-stipendiary ministers are employed in academia and have contributed to the academic debate on the subject.

An example of such academic input is James Francis and Leslie Francis who wrote:

> *Indeed even the very description of this ministry is varied. Self-supporting ministry, tentmaking ministry (after the example of St Paul), non-stipendiary ministry, voluntary ministry, honorary ministry, supplementary ministry, auxiliary ministry, worker-priest ministry and ministry in secular employment are all terms in use which seek to interpret various aspects, or even provide overall definition of this ministry.* (Francis & Francis 1998 p. xv) [27]

In providing the key words on which they based their own literature search, Francis and Francis highlighted the challenge facing any student of ordained priestly ministry in the non-stipended field as one of definition. The present study is therefore focused on one particular aspect of such ministry, i.e. the ordained priestly ministry in the English Anglican tradition of a group of priests who emerged from the 1960s onwards whose prime interest was not in the parochial model of priestly ministry, but in active engagement with the world of work. This perspective requires further definition, because several of the approved priestly roles in the English Anglican tradition have these interests as their principle concern in various ways (occupation related chaplaincies or sectoral chaplaincies in health care, the prisons or the military for example). The process is complicated by the fact that various titles are used even among those in such roles and by their licensing

[23] (Fuller & Vaughan 1986b)
[24](Hacking 1990)
[25] (Francis 1999)
[26] (Miller 2007)
[27] (Francis and Francis 1998)

diocese. Having chosen the term ‘self-supporting ministry’, Francis and Francis continue:

> *Since some definition is necessary, self-supporting ministry as the focus of this book relates to two precise categories: first, those who have been selected and trained as non-stipendiary ministers, who are in secular employment and who remain in that employment after ordination, and second, those who after ordination enter secular employment in the exercise of a skill other than that acquired in ministerial training. ... including that of a person who is not in, or who has retired from, secular employment, and who is in effect a voluntary parish curate or minister.* (Francis & Francis 1998 p. xiv)[28]

This definition both clarifies and obfuscates. It clarifies the difference between those who are ordained after having acquired a profession or occupation, and those who were first ordained and then went in to employment. This has been a significant source of confusion, especially when the term ‘worker priest’ or one of its variants is used. The definition is not specific enough to enable a sharper focus to be taken on the first group referred to i.e., those who have acquired a profession or occupation and then seek ordination with the explicit intention of continuing in that employment. This group can be divided into at least two. First, there are those who see their prime role as assisting the parish ministers, ordained and lay, in their parish responsibilities. In that sense they are assistant priests to the parish of residence first and foremost, while continuing to work. The second group see their calling to be primarily to the world of work, i.e. to the non-residential world. This separation between residential and non-residential sits as an ever-present penumbra in this study as the parish system focuses primarily on the residential world. A second question therefore concerns the process by which definition of role and the awarding of a title has occurred, why it appears to be so difficult, and whether there are advantages or disadvantages to this either in terms of personal practice or organisational process. No national categorisation has been agreed which adds to the problem of identifying such individuals but it also reflects something of the ecclesiology underpinning the work of bishops in different dioceses. As dioceses classify licensed clergy differently it points to divergent views about the needs of the church and how they can be met. By identifying

[28] (Francis 1998)

groups of ordained clergy in ways unique to each diocese, the independent authority of the bishop is underlined and the requirement for compliance from clergy is demonstrated. Later in the study the question of who awards identity will be addressed, but at this point, it is important to recognise that the title under which the different types of non-stipendiary clergy work is often not determined by the clergy themselves.

Greenwood identifies this lack of clarity about MSEs as a challenge for parish priests in the modern era (p.171).[29] His observation is significant because it is an attempt to address one of the challenges of this development. It addresses the issue from the other side, as it were; this is not the MSE struggling to get the parish to understand the role, but an acknowledgement of the difficulties that parish priests have in assimilating the MSE into the responsibilities of the parish priest. While being part of a parish, though not always the one in which they reside, the first call on the time of MSEs is their involvement in the world of work, while at the same time being part of a parish, in which they may, or more likely may not, undertake their secular work. This also raises questions about where MSEs should be placed in the structure of the Church. Should they be under the oversight of a parish priest as a form of devolved episcope, or should their oversight be more broadly based with an Area Dean, or even under the supervision of a diocesan figure given responsibility for their specific roles? The basic question is how best to situate MSEs in order to maximise their contribution to the life and work of the church and what does the failure to do this systematically reveal about the implicit ecclesiology of the church.

MSEs as a group are the focus of this study. The term will be used to distinguish them from the generic non-stipendiary minister (NSM) title of which MSEs are one sub-group. Many ministers are non-stipendiary, and it increasingly includes those who are retired and licensed in their place of retirement, as well as those who return to do house-for-duty roles after their retirement from parish life. Equally, it

[29] (Greenwood 1994)

will illuminate the distinctions to be made about those involved in the sectoral (e.g. chaplaincy functions in hospitals, schools, prisons and the armed services) ministries. They too are engaged in the secular world, but their wage (i.e. not a stipend) is paid by the church or other sources. This distinction is particularly acute as it points to the difference between where a church decides it can afford to place a minister and organisations that employ a minister in order to fulfil a role that is organisationally designed and only then approved by the church. This is an inversion of the usual process with the demand for the role and function coming from the employer and not the church. This does not suggest that the church is averse to MSE appointments and might even have made such an appointment if it could have afforded to do so. However, the point here is that such priests' first loyalty is shifted from the church to their employer. It raises questions of self-definition, of tensions between being and doing, and of the nature of public recognition of the role(s) being undertaken. The established ecclesiology therefore has developed so as to permit through license, the existence of the MSE, but the church has not developed in a way which can resource this financially, or develop mechanisms for the effective integration of MSE into an overall missionary strategy. In consequence, the church appears permissive rather than enabling.

This produces a focus on how power is exercised in church settings. The on-the-edge nature of the MSE role, i.e. being a priest in the parish but not employed in parish work is not only understandably complex and uncomfortable to manage in personal terms, but also raises questions about how such individuals are perceived and how their skills are demonstrated by their ability to operate in multiple environments. Central to this is the perception that MSEs have authority, and with it therefore power, to work in different environments. This is in marked contrast to the normative parish priest role, which is marked out by specific residential requirements. This exercise of power in several places and the ability to move across organisational boundaries seems to be one of the key characteristics of MSEs. The question that arises therefore is how this ability to be powerful in

multiple settings is received and managed in the ecclesiology of the church. These issues are an essential backdrop to the study.

1.3 Key Studies in the Literature

1.3.1 The emergence of the MSE role

The eyes of the present tend to see degrees of permanence in the past that under closer examination are revealed to be illusory. So it is with the debate on MSE. The tendency has been to assume that MSEs emerged at some point in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the changing recruitment patterns to ordained priesthood. While it will be demonstrated that this argument was aired as part of the developmental process, it was by no means the fundamental impetus for change. In the wake of the concerns about possible dis-establishment of the church following the Great Reform Act of 1832, Thomas Arnold wrote his pamphlet on the subject of the reform of the church[30]. In a wide ranging discussion, Arnold included some commentary on the wisdom of reviving other orders of ministry so as to enable the mostly unchurched populations of the expanding cities to be drawn into Anglican church life. Though his concerns were characteristic of the era about how to engage the lower classes in ministry, the pamphlet raised questions about the then current processes for selection and training of priests. The debate that followed drew in a number of prominent church people, especially William Hale[31] and Walter Hook,[32] and led ultimately to discussion about the priestly role in the Convocation of Canterbury in 1862 and again in1884 and at the Convocation of York in 1882. From this process emerged not a different role for ordained priests, but that of Readers and a very limited number of ordained deacons in employment. Despite the subsequent moving of a private members Bill[33] in the House of Commons, and some biting publications of which C.N.

[30] (Arnold 1833)
[31] (Hale 1850)
[32] (Hook 1851)
[33] (Gedge 1887)

Barham's 1892 article in *The National Review*[34] is an example, Patrick Vaughan points out that the idea was to die for a generation (p. 68).[35]

1.3.2 Roland Allen

While Vaughan's assertion is organisationally true in that the church did not come back to debate worker priests publicly for nearly forty years, other moves were afoot. Central to these was Roland Allen. The main debate in the nineteenth century had focused on the engagement of the lower classes in ordained ministry, but at the turn of the century a new focus came into view. This was to be from a completely different perspective, but one of significance for MSEs. This time it was driven by the experience of the mission fields. The nineteenth century had seen the Anglican Church engage energetically on a global level in missionary activity. Along with many other denominations and traditions, David Bosch noted that as well as promoting Christianity, the missionary work was part of the imperial process, taking with it the implicit adoption of the home culture of the missionaries, if they meant to or not (p. 282).[36] This included selection and preparation for the ordained ministry being limited to the sending church. The ordination of priests extended only slowly to the indigenous population, and only when models of church were ecclesiologically sufficiently similar to the home church. Vaughan points out that eventually two voices emerged to challenge that position from their own experience of mission and were to go on, therefore, to challenge many assumptions about ordained ministry in Anglicanism (p.66). The first was Herbert Kelly, founder of the Society of Sacred Mission. His experience of working with an expanding church in Japan led him to make radical proposals about how to combine full and part-time ordained ministry and how to move on from parish-based systems to more local forms of Christian community (pp. 435-6).[37] He had been influenced by Allen's 1912 publication, *Missionary methods; St Paul's or ours?*[38] Allen had worked in China from 1895 to 1903. He had reached similar

[34] (Barham 1998)
[35] (Vaughan 1990)
[36] (Bosch 1991)
[37] (Kelly 1916)
[38] (Allen 1912)

conclusions to Kelly and had begun to believe that the only answer to the question of how to sustain a missionary church was to encourage the development of local pastors and to challenge the concept of full-time priests as the sole model of ordained priesthood. Allen was to spend much of the rest of his life pursuing this goal in different settings. The key note for the present study is that it was mission that brought part-time ministry and MSEs as defined here on to the church's agenda. The original impetus was mission overseas, not mission in the home country, a point that was to prove unhelpful over the next seventy years or so. It was about how to take religion to other people and enable Christian communities to be self-sustaining, outside of traditional Church of England parish frameworks. The centre of the debate was the question if the church could tolerate, let alone welcome, an approach to being church that was not absolutely and only parish-based. This was a fundamental challenge to the received ecclesiology.

Allen was to engage in an immense correspondence on the subject, as well as to publish extensively. Much of his thinking was summarised in his book *The case for voluntary clergy*, published in 1930.[39] In it he drew together the threads of his earlier writings in order to make some of his strongest recommendations. He was writing at a time when the shortage of clergy was widely acknowledged. He charts the pattern of recruitment between 1872 (n = 542) and 1928 (n = 385) with a range of 757 > 101 (p. 305). He is sceptical about the three solutions proposed to address the clergy shortage i.e.

- Bursaries and free training
- Uniting of small parishes
- Redistributing existing clergy (p. 247).

Allen's basic thesis was that the church was slowly dying because it could not attract priests to provide for the parishes in the cure of bishops. The focus of his criticism is therefore the episcopacy, which he sees as misreading the needs of

[39] (Allen 1930)

the church. His central criticism is a lack of creativity in thinking about the nature of recruitment to ordained ministry:

> *We take men out of all classes and put them into a special class which has enjoyed a certain social prestige for so long that men think that it will abide; and it is not abiding: it is departing rapidly.* (Allen 1930 p. 248)[35]

His concern was that the separation of ordained ministers from those whom they serve in parishes was undermining the capacity of the church to deliver its message. He was particularly critical of those who stood on their dignity:

> *Respect is not won by insisting upon the dignity of the office, especially when the man who insists upon the dignity of the office is not a man who commands respect by his own virtues and habits of life. Respect for an office is won when men see that those who hold it are men all other good men must respect.* (Allen 1930 p. 248)

Here he is also making a second point that is central to his thesis. He focused on the problems that arise when younger men of any class are accepted for training and ordination, and their only claim to be respected in the community to which they are sent is the status of the office for which they have been licensed. Allen's and Kelly's experience of the mission field had left both of them convinced that an effective Christian leader and ordained minister was one who was held in high regard by the community before ordination. Allen asserts repeatedly in this text and elsewhere, that it is one of the key components, not just of recognising who should be ordained, but who will be received as a Christian minister and leader in a community; in effect an individual who already holds such a position. The ordination will act as confirmation rather than initiation:

> *The respect of their fellows is one of the chief elements in the qualifications of voluntary clergy.* (Allen 1930 p. 249)[40]

It is not difficult to understand why Allen's writings were not always widely welcomed. Not only was he asserting as strongly as he could that the bishops were both failing in their duty to recruit men to the then single gender priesthood, but the very way they were going about it was, as far as Allen was concerned, only making things worse. Allen demonstrated how hard it was to get a hearing for a challenge to the extant ecclesiology. His marginalisation would have silenced the

[40] (Allen 1930)

issue completely if his arguments had not been picked up by at least one member of the episcopate.

1.3.3 FR Barry

Despite what appears to have been a prophetic approach to the issue both in terms of message, but also in the acerbic manner he generally chose to deliver it, Allen gained one very significant supporter, at least for his ideas. FR Barry was in due course to become Bishop of Southwell. He was aware of the response within the church to Allen's badgering about the subject of MSEs. In his review of Allen's book, which appeared in *The Guardian* on 11 April 1930, he wrote:

> *But I feel bound to record my own conviction that the case [made by Roland Allen] in its essentials is unanswerable. ... It cuts right down into our whole conception of the Christian life and the meaning of the church: that is, in the end, of the Incarnation.* (Barry 1998 p. 78)[41]

Not only is this the strongest possible statement of support, it also emphasises the nature of the theology that underpinned Allen's arguments. Allen's focus on the Incarnation was to establish one of the other key features of MSE ministry, namely a concern for the whole of God's creation that had become obscured by an unbalanced emphasis on the redemptive message. It links to the nature of the selection process that Barry describes as:

> *The New Testament gives directions about the way to make choice of fit persons. Mr Allen has a more or less easy task in showing that at almost every point contemporary practices violate them.* (Barry 1998 p. 78)

Barry shared Allen's perspective that the Church was operating on a class model rather than a community one. He observes:

> *We teach, in effect, 'no sacrament, no church'; yet we leave thousands of Christians without any sacraments at all, or any that issue out of corporate life. The appalling phrase, 'making your communion' which the clergy have taught the faithful to use, is some measure of our remoteness from a true organic conception of the Eucharist.* (Barry 1998 p. 79)

His criticism of a sacrament-centred church dependent on the presence of an ordained minister, which appeared to exclude other forms of being church and of sharing Christian community because a priest could not be provided, was exactly

[41] (Barry 1998)

the point that Allen had been trying to make. Allen drew on the experience of the early church, and Barry took up the theme:

> *No theological expertise is needed in order to be a dispenser of the sacraments. Still less, one would suppose, on any principle which can be recognised by Christianity, is it necessary to accept a stipend or to abstain from earning one's living in other ways that serve the kingdom of God, as a condition of being allowed to break the loaf on behalf of one's fellow disciples.* (Barry 1998 p. 79)

This was truly radical because it put the church's ministry to the people of God back into the hands of the people. It indicated that there was no absolute reason for believing that only a full-time professionalised priesthood could ensure that everyone enjoyed the benefits of being together in communion, both sacramentally and physically. He went on to criticise the then current practices in the Church of England in terms at least as strong as anything Allen had ever said:

> *The breach between clergy and laity is becoming wider every day, with growing peril to the church's life. This is the reunion that matters most. And as a preliminary to this, the church must really ask itself this question: is it certain that the 'historic ministry' must involve a 'clerical profession'? Indeed I should like to put it more strongly: is the notion of a clerical caste, of men who specialise in religion, really compatible with Christian life?* (Barry 1998 p. 80)

Barry's question about the compatibility of a 'clerical caste' and the Christian life is one that has yet to be answered, as Martyn Percy points out (p.30).[42] The subsequent seventy-five years form the story of the Church of England continuing to struggle with the notion of ministering to the people, rather than the ministry of the people. In many regards, one can note that this is true for other Christian denominations and indeed other faiths, but the key issue here is that non-stipendiary ministry evolved in the centre of a debate about the role and function of priests. The tension is between a perception that to exist, a church needs a priest to be present and that a church convenes because the people of God meet together in the presence of a priest. This concerns power, status and expectations of priests and priesthood. In this debate the role of the priest and the structure of the church are clearly entwined. A particular ecclesiology was in place that

[42] (Percy 2006)

prevented an easy shift in the modes of selection, the training mechanisms and the placing of priests in parishes, and was capable of resisting even the most stringent criticisms. The focus today may have shifted to issues of gender and sexual orientation, but the debate about the suitability of candidates continues. The experience of Ministry in Secular Employment points to a church that is struggling with the nature of such ministry, especially when examined from the parochial perspective. It is compounded by another uncertainty about the balance between ordained ministry and the ministry of all the believers. Allen and then Barry in particular, firstly brought both issues into the consciousness of the Church and then, in particular through Barry, were to experience the first emanations of something different happening. It also highlights a facet of how ecclesiology was being done because the factor that brought the debate into the church's hearing was a bishop, whose position therefore enabled his words to be received when the insights of an experienced cleric did not.

1.3.4 The Southwark course

The process of change in the church was inevitably entwined with the history of the society in which it existed. The 1939-45 war caused a major hiatus in the thinking and acting on this subject. As with the 1914-18 war, the church had been reminded of how wide the rift was between itself and the mass of the people. The church responded with the Commission on Evangelism, which produced the Report *Towards the conversion of England*[43] in 1945. Vaughan pointed out (p.148) that it contained two adventurous recommendations:

- In some circumstances a parish priest should be allowed to take a job in industry for a shorter or longer period
- In exceptional circumstances an industrial worker should be ordained as a deacon or a priest, to remain in industry and exercise his ministry as an industrial worker (pp 64-5 of the original report).

These recommendations from the sub-committee, chaired by Mervyn Stockwood, mark a key step on the journey to the establishment of MSEs. It cannot be without

[43] (Archbishops' Commission on Evangelism. 1945)

significance that as Bishop of Southwark, Stockwood was to oversee the innovatory changes in training for the priesthood that the committee anticipated.

To allow the formal creation of the non-stipendiary role, Vaughan pointed out, required the amendment of Canon 83 of the Church of England's Canons (pp. 168-78). The committee to review all the canons had been established in 1939. This led to the creation of a further committee being established in 1952 to address the question of priests working in secular employment. It reported to the Convocation of Canterbury in 1955.[44] It is the first official document of the Church of England to consider Non-Stipendiary Ministry in any depth. The report was to set the tone for all subsequent discussion on the subject. Vaughan pointed out its eight significant characteristics:

- The need to regularise the position of some clergy who were already supplementing their incomes
- That NSMs should be seen to be engaged in pastoral, evangelistic, sacramental and teaching functions, and therefore not just a sacramental specialist
- No remuneration apart from expenses
- Training should be local
- The parish was the normative model of all ordained priestly ministry
- The need for experimentation and pragmatic developments; no sudden changes therefore
- No comment about the sort of local ministry that Kelly and Allen espoused
- No theological justification was offered

The conclusion was that no agreement was reached on introducing NSMs, but it was agreed that the Canon should be amended. This gave the bishops flexibility, but set no timetable for institutional change.

[44] (Canterbury 1955)

The nature of this pattern of decision-making is significant. The Convocation's report could be described as permissive and indicative, but it is not managerially nor organisationally structured. Rather, the content is the reverse, and reflects the non-existence of a magisterium in the Church of England. Because no one person can be held ultimately accountable, as there is no paramount leader or overarching ruling body in the Church of England, the decision-making is largely consensual and lacking in what could be described as transparency. Certainly, no timescale for implementation of Convocation's report was agreed, or any sort of review date. However, the report was a reflection of the realties on the ground and was an effective way of allowing developments without setting about tackling the complexities of implementing a tectonic shift in the Church's understanding of its self as an institution. It reflected the ecclesiology of its era.

The reality was that change was underway and the five years 1956 to 1960 saw dramatic steps being taken. The experience of priests in employment in the Anglican churches overseas was beginning to be reflected in the church's public discussions in England, not least at the 1958 Lambeth Conference where a debate on supplementary ministry gained grudging approval. It was grudging because:

> *Such provision [of NSMs] is not to be regarded as a substitute for the full-time ministry of the Church, but as an addition to it.* (Resolution 89 Lambeth Conference 1958)[45]

The Lambeth Conference gave permission for wide scale experimentation to proceed, but made it clear that this form of priesthood was to remain secondary to parish ministry. The normative nature of parish ministry was re-affirmed therefore as a major ecclesiological challenge to the reception of NSMs in general, and MSEs in particular. However, it was enough for one bishop in particular and it was the Southwark diocese, led by Bishop Mervyn Stockwood, which was to act first. On 16 September 1960, 31 men started training for ordination on a programme that was to be the model for all others to follow. It was a part-time course and designed with the intention of fitting around their work and family commitments. Only one significant obstacle remained: the repeal of the 1838 Pluralities Act. This

[45] (Lambeth Conference 1958)

was the successor of legislation passed first in 1529 and repealed in 1817 when in the same year, a second Act was passed. In 1964, *The Clergy (Ordination and Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure*[46] passed into law permitting an ordained minister to be employed as long as he had a licence from his Bishop. This removed the final legal obstacle to the establishment of NSMs, and especially MSEs. However, ecclesiologically, it is important to note that Stockwood initiated the course when legal barriers were still in place and that indeed, the first cohorts were ordained while to work for a living and be licensed as an ordained priest was still illegal.

1.4. Thinking about clergy in the 1960s and 1970s

Authors like Arthur Marwick[47], Mark Donnelly[48], Howard Sounes[49] and Dominic Sandbrook[50] all see the 1960s and 1970s as key turning times in British history. Their observations are about how everything from central heating to the availability of cheap tailored clothing changed the way in which society thought about itself and even more significantly, how individuals behaved. As with many institutions during those decades, the church began to think seriously about itself and in particular from where to attract the next generation of priests, given the social changes that were occurring.

1.4.1 Leslie Paul

Foremost among the studies undertaken on the supply and utilisation of clergy was *The deployment and payment of the clergy* by Leslie Paul.[51] Paul was a sociologist and was given a remit to explore in depth the situation that the church faced. His charting of how the numbers of clergy had varied in contrast to the overall population remains a baseline for subsequent studies. Over nearly four years he drew together a picture of decline and inaction, which led him to write in conclusion that:

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[46] (Halsbury 1969)
[47] (Marwick 1998)
[48] (Donnelly 2005)
[49] (Sounes 2006)
[50] (Sandbrook 2006)
[51] (Paul 1964)

> *The crux of the whole problem of deployment seems to me this - though short of manpower the Church cannot use the clergy it has as effectively as it ought: it is a bad steward.* (Paul 1964 p. 171)

This pointed observation in purposefully theological language to enhance its reception, among many others by Paul, may account for why his report commissioned by the Church of England was so poorly received. He opened his report with the words:

> *In the country as a whole, though not everywhere to the same degree, the Church of England is facing a loss of membership and the attribution of its power and influence. … The apparatus of its once central position remains, but emptied of power; … The Church is not at the heart of their affairs [ordinary men and women] as once it was, despite popular attachment to it as an historical and picturesque institution.* (Paul 1964 p. 11)

Paul was clear that the institution was not only struggling, but had failed to maintain its position in society. This move from the assumed heart of society to the margins may be over-egging the modernity of the situation, because, as Hugh McLeod observes:

> *In the 1940s and 1950s aspects of Christianity survived, though with varying degrees of vigour, in all parts of the Western world. But for more than two centuries there had been a process of erosion, as Christian doctrine and moral teachings faced significant challenge, as a variety of religious options became available, and new secular ideologies (sometimes with state backing) tried to take the place of Christianity and the church.* (McLeod 2007 p. 18)[52]

While Paul may have underestimated how far back the roots of the perceived crisis in clergy supply actually went, his observations on the situation he examined are pertinent today. Principally, he was drawing attention to:

- Declining membership and congregations and exploring the link between that and the falling number of clergy in terms of the whole community
- A link between poor internal organisation and failure to maximise the use of resources
- The reduced social influence of the Church as a consequence of its failure to have spiritual influence

[52] (McLeod 2007)

- The impact of social and demographic factors on religious loyalty and practice
- The inflexibility of the parish framework in a mobile society
- The failure to recognise the vocations of the laity in a world where the clergy are not found

What Paul was doing was to point to some very uncomfortable facts about how the Church conducted its business, but more insightfully, into the church's tendency to make decisions of real organisational and personal importance without feeling the need to draw together the necessary data on which to base such decisions. While this might be perceived to be 'prophetic' and a message to the world about how to act with faith rather than calculation, it also highlights profound sociological and ecclesiological standpoints. For whatever reason, the church did not feel the need to act in a publicly accountable manner. Its ecclesiological traditions sustained the internal propriety of acting on the basis of tradition, which meant ecclesiologically that the bishops made the decisions and were outside any accountability process. Synodical governance was still six years away, and the hierarchy was happy to rely on the patterns of operation developed by their predecessors. The historical influences were all internal. The significant point is that there was enough awareness of other ways of doing things to commission Paul to undertake his research. The National Assembly of the Church of England had instructed the Central Advisory Council for Ministry – the body responsible for the selection and training of Church of England priests – to examine the payment and deployment of clergy, and thus Paul was commissioned to study the subject. His report illuminated a turning point; it is evidence that the church was beginning to realise that the previous situation was not sustainable and that data was required to make judgements, not only relying on the historic wisdom of the bishops in conclave. However, ecclesiologically the bishops had not felt compelled to address the conclusions of such data. The Sixties were a trigger point for change and in particular, the awareness that the assumptions of the past were being replaced by evidence based decision-making. MSEs were deeply embedded in that change and continued to be so. It points to a time lag, if not an outright gap between

cultural change and ecclesiological development which is a key element of this study.

Using the focus of MSEs to read Paul's report highlights other issues. Paul was interested in how new shapes of priesthood were created. He noted the emergence of the first worker priests and began to speculate on the possible future associated with the second generation:

> *One can see that if the worker-priest movement grows, then at some point it will prove a source of recruitment. Men at the work-bench not ordained will seek to be ordained because they admire their comrades who are. To a limited extent this seems to be happening in Southwark diocese under the part-time scheme for training for ordination, perhaps elsewhere, too.* (Paul 1964 p.154)

He goes on to consider what the best possible outcome of such a development would be:

> *The report proposes an increase of the priesthood by acceptance of volunteers from other professions - not a makeshift arrangement to tide us over manpower shortage but rather as a new dimension of the priesthood altogether which will make the work of the Church more effective among the professions and in workplaces and bring a new priestly order to the rescue of the old. It would secure much needed assistance at the level of the Sunday duties of the parochial clergy, but this would be only one of many contributions. The voluntary clergy would probably be older men. They would have to be adequately trained and prepared for ordination, for professional standards for the priesthood must be maintained. Many problems would be solved if this new category of priesthood could on ordination be enrolled in a society of secular priests, self-regulating under episcopal sanction and visitation, which would watch over the priestly as well as the secular employment of its members and enforce the standards it thought appropriate*. (Paul 1964 pp 155-6)

The report was eventually published in 1968 as the Welsby Report.[53] It was deeply influenced by Paul's thinking. Paul recognised with the authors of the Welsby Report that the next generation of worker priests would come from the modern 'professions' of management, the armed services, the media, social work, architecture, the world of the arts, to quote a few. The era of priests being associated with a social class that did not engage in such applied professions was

[53] (Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry 1968)

passing. Paul was concerned that the church was insufficiently prescient to respond to this degree of change in a timely manner. He was indicating that the power of inertia suggested that the active management of the change that was coming would mean that its potential was not examined or exploited. Simultaneously he was pointing to a change that was to have a dramatic impact not just on the social backgrounds of future priests, but also on where the bulk of their work would be undertaken, i.e. a shift from place of residence to place of work. Intriguingly, the notion of an 'Order' of worker priests – as a way of encapsulating their work ecclesiologically as Paul and Welsby suggested – has never been explored, though this was similar to the course followed by the *prêtres ouvriers* after 1965. Despite Paul flagging up the complexity of episcopal oversight for such priests, it is difficult to identify historical examples of such oversight of the priests engaged in MSE ministry in the literature examined or the archive collected. However, some very recent developments point to this being changed.

1.4.2 Towler and Coxon

Following Paul, the second major study of Anglican clergy was by Robert Towler and Anthony Coxon.[54] Towler had written about the changing position of clergy in society in the late 1960s. He concluded that:

> *It can be maintained that the problems of the Ministry, in common with all problems of organized religion, are due to the anachronistic relationship of religion to a secular society and culture.* (Towler 1969 p. 443)[55]

His subsequent study with Coxon started with the assumption that secularism was the dominant issue:

> If by 'secularisation' we mean the displacement of the churches from a central to a peripheral role in the public life of society, then we may say that the 1960s saw its acceptance in the West as a *fait accompli*. (Towler & Coxon 1979 p. 3)[56]

Paul had started from the same perspective:

> Historians have left us in no doubt that the decline in the influence of the Church is the other side of the medal of the increasing secularisation of society. (Paul 1964 p. 11)[57]

[54] (Towler and Coxon 1979)
[55] (Towler 1969)
[56] (Towler & Coxon 1979)
[57] (Paul 1964)

Towler and Coxon were sociologists whose interest in this subject arose from an academic perspective rather than being commissioned. They examined what the changes in the clerical workforce in the Church of England could reveal about the future shape of the church. Behind their study was a shared view that things could not remain the same. They wrote:

> *... the role of the priest in his parish, and of the clergy as a group in society, is ambiguous and uncertain, because it developed gradually in order to meet the needs of former ages and became fixed in a form appropriate to a society which no longer exists. The parish does not need a paterfamilias, because the parish as a natural community has vanished with the development of cities, towns and rural districts. The country as a whole does not need clergy who will minister to the people in the ways their predecessors did, for it has secular Ministries of Education and Science, Health and Social Security, a Minister of Arts, and so forth.* (Towler & Coxon 1979 pp 39-40)

Towler and Coxon saw secularisation operating in two ways: as a diminution in the number of people engaged in religious practice, and that the organs of social and pastoral care that the church had organised in the local parish community had been taken over and were now provided by the state. This points to a change in the socio-cultural context of the church and of those who represented it, as well as a very significant shift in terms of social influence and power of the institution as whole. As far as Towler and Coxon were concerned, their interest was in why the church itself did not see the impact of the changes around it and though they do not use the term ecclesiology, what they are asking about is the way in which the bishops respond to such challenges and therefore about the implicit ecclesiology. They identified two critical changes. The first concerns the nature of recruitment to parish ministry:

> *In sum, the ministry has tended to become more representative of the population as a whole and less middle class, following the lead given by the late [vocation] group in the 1960s, but not owing to the continued relative shrinkage of the normal age [i.e. about 24] group.* (Towler & Coxon 1979 p. 87)

The problem that Paul had identified, of shrinkage in the numbers recruited to priestly training due to continued attempts to attract people from upper social classes, and therefore different from the majority of people being ministered to,

seemed to have been addressed through recruitment of people from a wider range of social backgrounds. Towler and Coxon saw the attraction of candidates into the priesthood from the older age groups – the 'late vocations' – as being a major influence on this rebalancing. They also had the benefit of being able to observe the impact of over a decade's worth of output from the part-time, non-residential preparation courses. In the light of that they wrote:

> *Men are said to work in the APM [Auxiliary Pastoral Ministry] when they have been ordained without the normal full-time training and continue to earn their living in a secular occupation while serving in a parish on a part-time basis. The inclusion of the word 'auxiliary' serves to make it plain that the Church, in ordaining men on these terms, does not wish to accept as normal anything other than the traditional full-time ministry. The development is no less significant for that, of course, ... What we must notice about the APM, however, is that under its auspices men are being inducted directly to a style of ministry which exists already in the practice of clergy who have quit the parochial ministry and then, as teachers or social workers or whatever, help in parishes at weekends. In other words, the men who enter the APM serve to swell the numbers of clergy who are not part of the Church's normal structure.* (Towler & Coxon 1979 p. 188)

This observation is important for three elements that surfaced repeatedly from the collected archive of sources from MSEs. Firstly, their priesthood is seen as one that enables them primarily to serve part-time in a parish. Winning recognition from the church of the fuller ontological implications of their ordination has proved problematic i.e. that the ordination applies to all aspects of their lives. The reality that their role as a priest is full-time is not aided by the notion that roles like priesthood are interpreted in employment based language, complicated further by the need to identify the link between their ordination and their continuing earning of an income. Second, the church does not see the role of MSEs as normal because the parish is the normal role. Third, the authors suggested that the new role was nothing else than something that had been around for centuries, i.e. the adoption of secular work by priests who gave up their full-time parish role in order to engage in secular activities. This is a form of denial of the MSE role that persists. It seems to be very difficult to communicate the difference between priests who feel called to ordained ministry while remaining in the place of work, rather than those who

move in the opposite direction, from the workplace into parish ministry. It is interesting to note Towler and Coxon writing a little later in the text:

> *We contend that the very concept of priesthood or ministry as a calling from which men may legitimately expect financial support is dying fast. ... All contemporary thinking applies the notions of priesthood and ministry to the Church as a whole, shifting them away from the clergy to the laity. This does not mean that there is no future for full-time employees of the Church. It does mean, however, that the combination, in the status of the clergy, of full-time remunerated service and religiously defined ministry has dissolved*. (Towler & Coxon 1979 p. 194)

It might come as a surprise to Towler and Coxon that by 2014 nearly 8,000 clergy are still in these church remunerated roles. However, they have been proved right about the expanded role of the laity and the increase in the numbers of self-supporting ministers. The sociological analysis was not the ecclesiological one. For the Church, the demand for change coming from studies like these did not carry the weight of influence that tradition and precedent did. The power of inertia outweighed the force that indicated it was critical to address the relationship between the number of clergy, their distribution and their roles in a secularising world.

1.4.3 Seward Hiltner

Writing in the same period, two American theologians were concerned about the same issue, if for slightly different reasons. Seward Hiltner and Urban T Holmes (see below) were equally critical of a church that was taking decisions without thinking through their implications. This time the concerns were theological rather than sociological. Interestingly, both writers believed that the social sciences, including psychology, had a part to play in informing the theological decisions. Their critique underpins an approach to ecclesiology that actively incorporates other sources of information and patterns of thinking as a way of illuminating the decisions to be taken to understand in particular how such decisions impact on all those affected.

Hiltner's focus was on pastoralia. He was concerned that there were few logical or theoretical bases for the pastoral ministry that priests in particular and the church in general engaged in. In 1958 he wrote that:

> *The conviction grew that the systematic exploration of psychology in its more comprehensive sense, with theological questions in mind and theological conclusions drawn, was vital to our understanding of the faith*. (Hiltner 1958 p. 36)[58]

Hiltner had applied psychology to theology in his own teaching and was using it to challenge the supposed rationale for the actions of the church. He described the process of applying psychology to issues of pastoral care as a way of developing 'basic theory' (p. 36). His sustaining theological motif was that of shepherding:

> *The content of pastoral theology is, then, the theological theory resulting from the shepherding perspective and studied under the subheadings of healing, sustaining and guiding.* (Hiltner 1958 p. 69)

Through this motif of shepherding he showed that the church is incapable of relating to the professional abilities of either its helpers or its laity in general. He understood this breakdown to have occurred because of a lack of a constructive relationship between clergy and laity:

> *Their [the laity] professional focus lies properly in their own discipline, whatever it is. But pastoral theology should be able to help them orient themselves and their discipline to the church, and help them to bring their Christianity and their work into fruitful relationship.* (Hiltner 1958 p. 38)

He associated the breaking of the link between parishioners and priest as having more to do with variation in professional development and therefore in the focus and orientation that each might bring to their faith and the work that the church called them to. Hiltner's concern was not geography and recruitment, but urban development and the social background of individuals and their impact on behaviour. Writing a decade later, he observed:

> *No matter that even in our own complex and secular day, when the old notion of 'parish' as a particular area where people sleep and work has almost expired, the majority of people can still be ministered to by local churches for most of their lives if they are interested in the services of ministry. For some periods of his life however - college years, armed services,*

[58] (Hiltner 1958)

> *and the like - every person today needs a special ministry. And some people need special ministries most of their lives if they are to have any at all.* (Hiltner 1969 p. 187)[59]

Here Hiltner was pointing to a phenomenon of real significance for future worker priests. He perceived a generation emerging whose only contact with faith and its practitioners would be if they were integrated (not always willingly) into particular institutions e.g. armed services, prison. He was pointing to the rising generations of people who would be 'unchurched'. He took the argument further by pointing out one of the anomalies of this development:

> *It seems significant that, in these two settings [prison and armed services] where it became clear that the special situation demanded special ministry, the solutions finally worked out involved negotiated protection by the church of the actual ministry, but a budget from somewhere else. Although I do not wish to make a fetish of this principle, I believe that satisfactory negotiated solutions in the future on the part of many of the now emerging forms of ministry are very likely to follow a similar course. (*Hiltner 1969 pp 188-9)

The consequence of allowing the secular institutions to determine the opportunity for exposure to faith-based institutions was that they paid the ministers employed in these organisations and therefore had first call on the ministers' loyalty. Ecclesiologically, this creates a paradox where people choose to stop going to church, but encounter the church in institutions they work in or are associated with, as organised by those who run the institutions or organisations. Such developments point to a wide range of social shifts, but for the purposes of this study illuminates the manner in which the power of the church has changed. The Victorian entrepreneurs come to mind who built churches as one of the tools to discipline their work force and improve productivity. Theirs was an example of using the church structure, i.e. parishes and church buildings, and instead of renegotiating parish boundaries with less than co-operative bishops, simply imposed church buildings as the symbol of the church's presence. In recent times, the model seems to have been once more to ignore the parish boundaries, and even the church buildings and simply acquire the symbolic person, i.e. a priest/ordained minister, in order again to support the work of the organisation. It is

[59] (Hiltner 1969)

ironic that this can be deduced as a development of the present era and as a consequence of the church not changing its organisational structures to meet people where they are. It is into this new culture and ecclesiology that the MSEs are placed

1.4.4. Urban T Holmes III

Holmes continues with this line of thinking:

> *… the shape and form of ministry in every age is the result of man's self-consciousness and his social structures. Consequently, if it becomes detached from culture … It lacks the reality necessary to work with power among men. This is true of Christ's ministry, and it is true of ours.* (Holmes 1971 p. 5)[60]

Holmes was deeply concerned about the detachment of ordained ministry from the world in which it dwelt. In his review of the history of ministerial development Holmes noted that:

> *… once the Church becomes deeply involved in the power structure of the society (313 AD on), there is a growing desire to set the clergy apart from the rest of mankind in dress, work, education, family, and morality. It appears to be a need of the Church that holds dear the concept of Christendom.* (Holmes 1971 p. 96)

He had already asserted that:

> *… ministerial function is related only loosely to any ontological theories of ministerial order.* (Holmes 1971 p. 95)

and went on to argue that the role and function of the Christian minister has continually mutated over time:

> *Contemporary people do not think of themselves, they say, as persons of a particular place. Rather, their identity is tied up with how they spend their time (work, education, recreation*). (Holmes 1971 p. 127)

In parallel he looked at the response of the clergy to the failure of the church to respond to this degree of cultural change. Holmes engaged with priests who had entered the world of work following disillusionment with the organisation of the church, its role definitions and inadequate cognitive frameworks when faced with significant social change:

> *I have carefully spoken of men leaving 'stipendiary ministry', not the 'ministry'. Many who are now secularly employed consider themselves better 'ministers' than before. The*

[60] (Holmes 1971)

problem is with structures, identity of professional role, cognitive patterns; not with belief in Jesus … (Holmes 1971 p. 160)

His conclusion therefore was that:

It [ministry] has not freed itself from the past sufficiently to grasp fully the reality that is emerging in our own culture, and it has not been sensitive to its own Lord and to the dimensions of contemporary life that afford opportunities to express a sense of transcendence. (Holmes 1971 p. 204)

Holmes' text reads increasingly like Allen. His perception is of people chosen in the place where they are, to be a minister to that community, rather than a priest chosen through the church structures and then given to a place or parish:

Rather the Church looks at a given Christian community and finds there the natural leader, the charismatic Christian, and gives him - or her - the training necessary to sharpen the gift of grace already evident in his life, and authorizes him through ordination to function as the presbyter, the sacerdos*, of that community. He is not a 'professional'; he is not paid for this, just as the presbyters may not have been paid in the ancient Church. This person works alongside his people, as priests have done in many ways for much longer than they have not, and in this way shares even better with them the liminal quality of his life.*

The point to be inferred here is that while the Church must affirm its universal quality, it must also recognize the reality of the distinct community. ... But the unique nature of a given community demands a match with its sacramental person. As in the ancient Church, a man is ordained to the cure of which he is already a part, and the assumption is that he remains with that community. If he moves to another community, he must be acknowledged by that group as the sacramental person before he so functions. Clearly this foresees men entering priesthood as a rule at a later age than twenty-four or twenty-five, and abolishes the accustomed notions of the 'clerical career' ... It also plays down the notion of 'character' in Holy Orders, and emphasizes the communal nature of the priestly office. (Holmes 1971 p. 251)

He concluded therefore with:

So I am suggesting that in the future we need to embrace a concept of relatively non-stipendiary, frequently indigenous priestly ministry not as a 'stop-gap measure' of an economically floundering Church, but as a tested method of effective service. (Holmes 1971 p. 253)

Having reached this conclusion from his observation of changes in the North American church in the 1960s, Holmes took the development of the non-stipendiary role further than had been agreed in England. He also expanded the

ecclesiological implications of adopting styles of ministry that were not simply parochial or concerned with chaplaincy. His was a root and branch change. It called for local recognition of the charism and the ability of the individual to be able to support himself (it was to be sometime before women could become ministers in these churches) and his family. While Holmes believed that people at large still assumed the presence of the parish and its church, he was acknowledging that the future would not necessarily hold to that approach. The combination of urban change, different social expectations and educational development among believers demanded a different ecclesiology of ministry. Holmes argued that change had been constantly combined with a critique of the incumbent's inability to respond to the new culture and social settings (p. 189) thus setting up the scenario whereby in North America self-supporting ministers are known as tentmakers and in England as MSEs.

1.5 Conclusion

This brief overview of key studies on changes in church ministry suggests that by the 1960s in both the UK and North America church people were becoming aware that some sort of crisis was unfolding around them. The central message was clear: the number of men (because it was still men at that point) coming forward for ordination to the priesthood in the Church of England was in marked decline. The approaches adopted to attract candidates for ordination were not as effective as hoped, and therefore new approaches to recruitment were needed. The development of the Southwark course and the emergence in North America of men who had left ordained ministry to work full time as well as ministers in a church pointed to a new way of doing things, or perhaps more correctly, a reversion to an older pattern of clerical provision where the clergy were largely self-supporting. As sectorial ministry developed chaplaincies in major institutions and in industry indicated that the shape of the church was changing and becoming less geographic in definition and more associated with where people were during their work time. Implicit in this development was a change in the parameters of authority of a bishop: the chaplains were paid by employers and not the church. This meant that while the bishops might license the position, they did not resource

or determine the parameters of the role. The church's role became permissive and enabling rather than instituting and resourcing. The challenge therefore was to achieve a balance between church based life and service to Christians and others in their daily lives, which meant where individuals lived their daily life. The church was revealed as being in flux and not only unclear about the issues but also uncertain how to devise a solution; it was being challenged both culturally and ecclesiologically.

The review of the history and key documents in this first period of study indicate that other forces were also at work. These included very significant social change both in terms of individual expectations and behaviours, as well as in church life where the laity, not the clergy, were being recognised as the key element. The laity was increasingly capable of taking the leadership for the life of the church with clergy being recognised as facilitators and enablers rather than being the absolute ruler of the flock. The rationale for the structure of parishes as geographic entities had broken down with the ending of communities largely living and working in the same places. This had implications for other social agencies as well as the church. Marwick noted that:

> *The real importance of the changes and developments of the sixties is that they transformed the lives of ordinary people, in material conditions, in family and personal relationships, and in leisure activities.* (Marwick 1998 p. 792) [61]

Marwick's perception was of a cultural change taking place that impacted nearly everyone and where individualism had emerged as a potent motivation. Noting McLeod's[62] observation that many of the causes that brought the social changes of the 1960s had been happening for more than two centuries, Marwick suggested that deep perceptual problems existed as the challenges were being responded to as if they were a comparatively recent phenomenon. The teachings and doctrines of the church had been increasingly challenged, new patterns of religious life had emerged that were not dependent on the Church of England, and new secular

[61] (Marwick 1998)
[62] (McLeod 2007)

based belief systems had been adopted that were not dependent on Christianity. The value base of society had changed markedly over many decades.

Almost by accident and through the experience of countries outside the UK, the Church of England gave permission for an experiment in non-parish priest ordained ministry. Interestingly, no limit was set on the extent of this experiment, which means that several types of non-stipendiary ministers became recognised, especially the MSEs. The fact that MSEs are a subset of this 'grand experiment' makes them a useful prism through which to examine the church. Ecclesiologically, MSEs enable a number of questions to be raised. These vary from foci on the place or position of MSEs in terms of church and urban renewal, through to how they are perceived to exercise power, or have power exercised upon them. Such foci illuminate how the church sees itself, both in terms of geography and as social agent, as well as its understanding of the nature of power, either in the secular sphere or as an organisation managing internal change. The review of key documents and the brief summary of the history also point to how both bishops and parish priests were losing, if indeed had not already lost, the authority attributed to them because of their historic church positions. Examining the track of development of MSE helps demonstrate the degree to which bishops and parish priests have, or have not perceived this change and reacted to it. The power of inertia is one way of encapsulating what seems to have occurred. Towler and Coxon's[63] (p.194) almost apocalyptic prophesy 'the status of the clergy, of full-time remunerated service and religiously defined ministry has dissolved', is a logical conclusion which when considered retrospectively remains indicative of how the church was seen to be separating from the culture of the society it existed in.

It is striking how the literature points consistently to the decision-making about clergy recruitment and disposition was significantly behind the cultural change in society. It points to the nature of the dominant ecclesiology and its ability to persist

[63] (Towler & Coxon 1979)

in its *modus operandi* in the face of the evidence which it had commissioned. However, as David Martin points out, the Church has refused to be marginalized and privatized in this process (p.24),[64] but it is perceived to be weak and in many situations fails to qualify as a partner for public dialogue or even consultation. A methodology to investigate this is required and therefore the next chapter describes how MSE will be the lens for such an investigation

[64] (Martin 2005)

Chapter 2 Methodology

> **…the past exists by definition only in the modality of its current historiographical representations, ...[the past] is what can be derived and constructed from the historicised record or archive. ... [the past is] signified by its remaining traces, ... *(Jenkins 1995 pp 16-7*)**

2.1 Introduction – the choice of the archive

Keith Jenkins, writing in 1995,[65] identified one of the key problems in understanding history: the available accounts of events are all products of an author's gathering and shaping of material at a subsequent date. The mechanisms for gathering and shaping the materials are therefore critical. What is included and excluded will determine the outcome, as will the way in which the material is presented. This has been the basis of major debates about the nature of history[66],[67],[68],[69]and is focused on how different interpretations about known events can be restated. It is important to recognise this here because of the nature of the material gathered for this study. The material covers the period from 1960 to 2010. Those who wrote the articles and letters that comprise the material were the products of their time. Those who were interviewed were reflecting more or less consciously their understanding of the social context in which they were operating. It was important therefore to adopt a research methodology that is capable of evaluating both content and context.

The content and context of ministry in secular employment in the Church of England has proved difficult to capture (as identified in section 1.2.3 above). The

[65] (Jenkins 1995)
[66] (Collingwood 1946)
[67] (Popper 1957)
[68] (Carr 1961)
[69] (Marwick 1970)

breadth of writing on the subject is extensive[70,71,72,73,74,75,76,77,78,79,80,81]. In order to contextualise MSE and to enable its closer examination, the intention was to use the reported experience of MSEs. Of themselves they reflect individual approaches to ministry. Understanding them collectively is an exercise in ecclesiology and a journey into what it means to be church. The underlying assumption is that the role of the parish priest remains normative in the Church of England for the period of the study. MSEs therefore offered the opportunity to look at the nature of church in a sideways manner and identify what are the characteristics of an institution that permits such a development without making significant organisational changes to integrate or maximise the role and its potential. To do this an archive of material has been gathered.

The literature on the subject has been supplemented with various primary sources. The main one consists of 25 interviews originally conducted by John Fuller, Patrick Vaughan and John Goodall; nine were reported in Fuller and Vaughan's book *Working for the Kingdom* (1986).[82] In total, 32 interviews were undertaken, but had never been transcribed. Discussion with Vaughan indicated that they had only been used to draw illustrations for the purpose of illuminating the broader interests of the authors in their text. Seven of the interviews could not be transcribed because of the deterioration of the tape over time. These transcribed interviews therefore provide the foundation and baseline for the study.

[70] (Forder 1947)
[71] (Paul 1964)
[72] (Wilson 1968)
[73] (Russell 1980)
[74] (Baelz and Jacob 1985)
[75] (Russell 1993)
[76] (Greenwood 1994)
[77] (Hinton 1994)
[78] (Ross 1997)
[79] (Mantle 2000)
[80] (Guiver 2001)
[81] (Percy 2006)
[82](Fuller & Vaughan 1986b)

In the period under consideration (1960-2010), sources accessed before May 2012 were:

- Interviews of ordinands who were licensed as NSMs, undertaken by Fuller and Vaughan in 1983 and 1984, which I transcribed in 2006. As the tapes were deteriorating, only twenty-five interviews out of thirty-two undertaken were transcribed.
- Some papers reviewing of NSM/MSE ministry as part completion of academic qualifications
    - MA thesis by Raymond Everleigh, focused mainly on NSMs as parish auxiliaries (University of Hull Sept 1995)
    - Course work undertaken by Tim Hurren during training for the priesthood on the Northern Œcumenical Ordination Course
        - Course project (2001)
        - End of year summation (2001)
        - End of course summation (2002)
    - End of course thesis *Ordination and School Leadership* by Ann Templeman at Cranmer Hall, University of Durham, including previously unanalysed questionnaire responses to her questionnaire sent to ordained head teachers (2004)
- A number of studies and reports have been accessed
    - Advisory Council for Church Ministry Occasional Paper by W H Saumarez Smith on *An Honorary Ministry* including analysis of the questionnaire used in the study (1977)
    - Church of Wales Bench of Bishops report on *Self Supporting Ministers*, including the analysis of the questionnaire used (1981)
    - Non Stipendiary Ministry: A report of pre-Lambeth consultation including a synopsis of the survey on Non Stipendiary Ministry in dioceses of the Anglican Communion at Edward King House Lincoln (1988)
    - Papers from the Dioceses of London and Southwark including the responses to two surveys of over 130 NSMs in the Diocese of

London not previously analysed in detail (1993 and 1995). These had been deposited with the Bishop's Chaplain to Canary Wharf in shoe boxes by an anonymous member of the steering group when no analysis of the survey was undertaken

  - A copy of the raw data from a survey of NSMs by Theresa Morgan (2010) which was subsequently published and is referenced later in the study
    - A secondary analysis of the Theresa Morgan report by Loveday Alexander (2011)

- Personal accounts of NSM/MSE ministry
  - Michael Rankin's sermons and reflections in the St Martin of Tours, Epsom, *Gazette* (the parish magazine) from 1973-1993, the period of his licensing in that parish and the period during which he established the NSM networks and newsletter publications in the Church of England
  - Ten personal accounts of NSM ministry in the Bradford Diocese by MSEs in that diocese entitled *A snapshot*, undertaken by the Diocesan Synod with the intention of developing a strategy for NSMs, educate those who would come into contact with them, and encourage others to come forward into this ministry (1994/5)
  - Personal accounts of MSE ministry published by the *Church Times* and other newspapers (2002-2011)
  - Sabbatical reflection on MSE in the United Reformed Church by Tim Key (2004)
  - A presentation to the Windermere Deanery Residential Chapter at St John's Durham on *Ministry at Work* by Pauline Pearson (11 July 2007)
  - *Reflections on MSE* from the MSE Group in the Coventry Diocese (2010). This is a revised version of a widely circulated collection of accounts first published in 2000

    - A lecture by Mark Wakefield, a BBC executive, given to the Leicestershire Far and Near Club in Oct 2010, entitled *Faith in the Workplace*
    - Hugh Valentine's reflection on St James Piccadilly website (accessed Feb 2011)
    - A sermon at St Margaret's, Westminster, on NSM/MSE by Bishop Stephen Croft (13 September 2011)
- The complete set of publications of the journal *Christians in Secular Ministry* by the organisation CHRISM, from 1977 to 2014 the present

This therefore provides a period of analysis of over thirty years. It is important to note that there is other material on this subject that has not been included. A number of other personal reflections and archives were offered both from people who were MSEs and others who received ministry from MSEs after the period of analysis was complete, and as it replicated what was already in the archive it was concluded that this current collection offers sufficient resources to explore matters of ecclesiology in this period. The problem of nomenclature identified in Chapter 1 applies here. While institutionally the individuals are classified as NSMs or SSMs, the archive utilises material that is drawn from sources where individuals reflect on themselves as MSEs. This gap between institutional title and self-perception is a key tension that illuminates something of the ecclesiological process in place, and which permits the existence of this role in the interstices of the church's structures and titling of priests.

The numbers of participants in the study exceeds the number of interviews significantly as in many instances two, three, or even four people were interviewed simultaneously. This makes it difficult to attribute comments to individuals on occasions. However, as the material is anonymised in the analysis, this is not a significant weakness. In reviewing the social backgrounds of the people and ministers who have contributed to this study through interviews and in response to questionnaires, it is clear that a wide variety is included, from the worlds of finance, politics and media, to ministers who are bus drivers and refuse collectors,

work in teaching, health care, the judiciary and public administration. Given the groupings during interviews already referred to, it is difficult to come to an exact number, but it is approaching 250 responses from different participants.

The reason for using this archive emerged from Foucault's questioning of the modernist assumptions of the orderly emergence of knowledge. MSEs are not normative in the Church of England, and have come into being without formal structures and processes of work. From the beginning, the proposals for their existence were counter-cultural and therefore a system of study that assumes ordered and progressive development will not illuminate the significance of this role. It is helpful therefore to follow Foucault's assumptions of discontinuity as an insight into what the Lambeth Conference in 1958 described as an initiative not to be considered 'as a substitute for the full-time ministry of the Church but as an addition to it'. (Resolution 89, Ministries and Manpower - The Supplementary Ministry, Lambeth Conference 1958, quoted by Vaughan, p.185).[83] The preparatory papers had referred to this as an 'experiment', and the final statement underlines the resistance to perceiving the development as one that was central to the life and growth of the church. The marginality of the role and the subsequent experiences reported by its practitioners all indicate the need for a research approach that exploits the discontinuity of the development.

An important insight into the development of MSE is reflection upon the identity awarded to the role. As will be seen from the archive, MSEs have long believed that they were responsible for determining the reception and role identity of this development. Drawing on the work of Appiah[84], this will be seen to be a flawed approach. Appiah questions an individual's capacity to determine their own perceived identity in society:

> *"Now, many people have the idea that the normative content of an identity should be determined essentially by its bearers. Even if it's true - which I doubt, since recognition by people of other identities is often a proper source of their meaning - this would still mean that*

[83] (Vaughan 1986)
[84] (Appiah 2005)

some people would have the content of their identities determined in part by others; namely, those of the same identity." [p.67]

Using Appiah's critique of identity selection, it becomes apparent that that the issue of identity is a key one in this study and has serious ramifications both for the experience of MSEs in that role, and the markedly different expectations of the church.

2.2 The socio-geographic context of MSEs

The social setting of MSE ministry as well as its geographic location is different to that of parochial clergy. MSEs have their prime focus outside of the parish while yet attached either to a geographically placed sector ministry or parish. Their focus concerns the world they work and live in. As a group they first became evident in the late 1960s at a time of vast urban and regional re-configuration of patterns of life. Paul Virilio, writing in 1997 explains the change in these terms:

> *The phrase 'to go into town', which replaced the nineteenth century's 'to go to town', indicates the uncertainty of the encounter, as if we could no longer stand before the city but abide forever within. If the metropolis is still a place, a geographic site, it no longer has anything to do with classical oppositions of city/country nor centre/periphery. The city is no longer organized into a localized and axial estate. While suburbs contributed to this dissolution, in fact the intramural-extramural opposition collapsed with the transport revolutions and the development of communications technologies. These promoted the merger of disconnected metropolitan fringes into a single urban mass.* (Virilio 2002 p. 441)[85]

Virilio is illuminating a problem of understanding. The tendency can be to focus on 'new developments' and not comprehend the wider implications of the transformation that has occurred. It is not simply a matter of reflecting on how cities were rebuilt after World War II, or noticing the impact of some 'new development' of offices or housing estates. Rather, it is the need to comprehend the wholesale restructuring of the way in which life is lived. Not only have the obvious boundaries between urban and rural been lost, but the way in which people dwell and inhabit space has been redefined. It is now more flexible, not least because of the developments in transport and communication technologies.

[85] (Virilio 2002)

The availability and cost of communication technologies have redefined what it means to live somewhere. Location has been replaced by contactability.

The Church of England is a geographically located organisation, with some 13,000 parishes and some 10,000 diocesan clergy in 1994. These figures are markedly down since 1911 when there were 22,000 such clergy, and the numbers continue to fall.[86] The shape of the parishes, their boundaries and their locations stem from Anglo-Saxon times when location and community were central to survival. The most significant change to this occurred with the establishment of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1835 which resulted in 2651 chapelries, and 1037 districts and parishes being created in the next hundred years. This was a natural response for an institution geared to having a church where ever there was a developing population and in response to the Church of England being the established church and therefore the need to ensure everyone could exercise the rights as parishioners to be baptised, married and buried within a parish. Despite these developments which were intended to both make the sacraments more available as well as maintaining the social and geographical links to a parish church, the numbers attending church as a percentage of the population fell continuously during the twentieth century.[87] As the number of buildings increased and therefore the number of geographic loci for ministry expanded, the church was on the cusp of experiencing the impact of the technologies, often ironically developed for military use, becoming accessible to the whole population. It was the communication technologies above all else that broke the link between the place where people lived and all other aspects of their lives, including the practice of their faith.

These changes have been facilitated by the increase in wealth, especially from the 1950s onwards. Marwick, writing about the UK, characterised it like this:

[86] (Jones 2000)
[87] (Bruce 2002)

> *... one of the most significant achievements of society in the sixties was the bringing of the basic amenities of civilized living to the vast majority of the people. The next biggest change is in regard to 'personal transport': for good or for ill a major element in the growth of private freedom in the sixties was the private motor vehicle.* (Marwick 1998 p. 761)[88]

An institution like the Church of England that defined itself through its parish structure and therefore its location was therefore at risk of being isolated from the communities it sought to serve and engage with. Social geography as a mechanism for exploring the issue of individual freedom of choice has become of increasing importance, as not just social scientists but organisations that are based on the provision of services to particular populations seek to understand how to reach and then communicate with their potential users.

> *The real importance of the changes and developments of the sixties is that they transformed the lives of ordinary people, in material conditions, in family and personal relationships, and in leisure activities.* (Marwick 1998 p. 792)[89]

Marwick's emphasis is on how material wealth gave offspring the opportunities to break out of the patterns of behaviour followed by parents and to seek a degree of individualism not considered previously possible. The change in the economic climate meant that for many people, for the first time there were options as to what they did with their leisure time, including Sundays, the day when by repute, if not practiced tradition, church attendance was a significant part of the behaviour of the community.

The development of such individualism in line with increased wealth and resources in communication and transport was something that was to continue at increased speed. It is sometimes referred to as the Information Technology (IT) revolution. Manuel Castells summarizes it like this:

> *... in spite of the decisive role of military funding and markets in fostering early stages of the electronics industry during the 1940s-1960s, the technological blossoming that took place in the early 1970s can be somehow related to the culture of freedom, individual innovation, and entrepreneurialism that grew out of the 1960s culture of American*

[88] (Marwick 1998)
[89] (Marwick 1998)

> *campuses. ... The emphasis on personalized devices, on interactivity, on networking and the relentless pursuit of new technological breakthroughs, even when it apparently did not make much business sense, was clearly a discontinuity with the somewhat cautious tradition of the corporate world. The information technology revolution half-consciously diffused through the material culture of our societies the libertarian spirit that flourished in the 1960s movements.* (Castells 1996 pp 5-6)[90]

Castells' identification of the relationship between technology and choice goes beyond that of the previous authors and focuses on the impact of the 'libertarian spirit' that emerged in the freedom movements of the 1960s. The IT developments meant that individuals no longer needed to travel back to their community in order to rest, assure loved ones of their safety, and take home resources, especially money. All of this could increasingly be done electronically. Equally, the focus shifts onto the nature of the communities in which such IT savvy individuals existed and operated. In brief, they were self-selecting communities that included their work colleagues, their leisure friends and often a degree of remoteness from each other that did not require frequent or even any, face-to-face contact. However, even that was to be resolved electronically with cameras embedded in computers and telephones. This set up a paradox, whereby individualism could be taken to extremes and conversely, there was the freedom to form new groupings that demonstrated quite remarkable parochialism based on exclusivity of membership.

In this context, in order to evaluate the MSE development ecclesiologically, it is important to view this briefly sketched scenario of social change that occurred in parallel with MSE development, so as to unearth the significance of the experience of MSEs. While it is possible to give some numeric account of the development, this does not help to illuminate the content of the archive used in this study. The accounts of individuals are a complex mix of factual and contextual analysis. What is needed is some way of unfolding the map that enables the content to be navigated in a comprehendible way. Castells offers a framework that provides such a route to follow. He observed:

[90] (Castells 1996)

> *My thesis is that the rise of the informational, global economy is characterized by the development of a new organizational logic which is related to the current process of technological change, but not dependent upon it. It is the convergence and interaction between a new technological paradigm and a new organisational logic that constitutes the historical foundation of the informational economy. However, this organizational logic manifests itself under different forms in various cultural and institutional contexts.* (Castells 1996 p. 164)[91]

Castells posited that a global economy had already existed that had both access to information and could manipulate and use it. He observed that a different 'organisational logic' had developed, which in various and often unspecified ways was part of the change scenario. His focus was the interaction between the technology and the decision-making processes of organisations, but with an implicit question about why there is such variation between different cultures and institutions. Castells identified two major factors. The first is the development of networks:

> *Yet recent historical experience has already provided some of the answers concerning the new organizational form of the informational economy. Under different organizational arrangements, and through diverse cultural expressions, they are all based on networks. Networks are the fundamental stuff of which new organizations are and will be made.* (Castells 1996 p.180)

Networks are of themselves insubstantial. They may consist of people, places and things, but what holds them together is not string or wire, but communication. Castells goes on to explain further how this works:

> *... our society is constructed around flows: flows of organizational interaction, flows of images, sounds and symbols. Flows are not just one element of the social organization: they are the expressions of processes dominating our economic, political, and symbolic life. If such is the case, the material support of the dominant processes in our society will be the ensemble of elements supporting such flows, and making materially possible their articulation in simultaneous time. Thus, I propose the idea that there is a new spatial form characteristic of social practices that dominate and shape the network society: the space of flows. The space of flows is the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows. By flows I understand purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences*

[91] (Castells 1996)

> *of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors in the economic, political, and symbolic structures of society. Dominant social practices are those which are embedded in dominant social structures. By dominant structures I understand those arrangements of organizations and institutions whose internal logic plays a strategic role in shaping social practices and social consciousness for society at large.* (Castells 1996 p. 442)

This is the world in which MSEs exist and if they are to exist purposefully, they need to be expert in. It is the world in which change is constantly immanent, if not continuous, where technological expertise in communication is essential, and where the organisations and institutions they engage with are highly competent in this culture. This focus on the networks in which they operate and the capacity to undertake their work in this 'space of flows' will illuminate the roles of MSEs and allow the role to be compared with their experience of engaging with that other institution, the Church of England. Castells' framework provides the questions to interrogate the archive and to examine the assumptions made by the contributors to it.

2.3 Narrative, Interview and Writing: the three bases of the archive

The question that presented itself was how, or in what ways to read this archive because it would be unfair to the diversity of the material and its richness to suggest only one way of reading to be possible or even appropriate. Such a stance places this research in the qualitative field of study. Methodology in this field has become increasingly diverse as the postmodern doubt about pure science has become more embedded in academe. Taking a too rigid approach to analysis and evaluation runs the risk of suggesting certainties in the material that may not exist, as well as focusing on issues that may effectively exclude other insights and readings. Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln express it like this:

> *There are two dangers inherent in the conventional texts of scientific method: that they may lead us to believe that the world is simpler than it is, and that they may reinscribe enduring forms of historical oppression. Put another way, we are confronted with a crisis of authority (which tells us the world is 'this way' when perhaps it is some other way, or many other ways) and a crisis of representation (which serves to silence those whose lives we*

> *appropriate for our social sciences, and which we may also serve subtly to recreate this world, rather than some other, perhaps even more complex, but just one).* (Guba & Lincoln 2005 pp 210-11)[92]

For MSEs, this interpretation of their story rings true; it reflects a superficial reading and encounter with their experience, as well as an effort to make it fit other, more normative, roles in the institution.

It is necessary therefore to examine analytic options that allow a more transgressive voice to be heard. Norman Denzin and Lincoln quote Howard S Becker in describing the researcher as a quilt maker:

> *The qualitative researcher as bricoleur, or maker of quilts, uses the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, and empirical material are to hand (Becker in Denzin and Lincoln 1998, p.2[93]). If the researcher needs to invent or piece together, new tools or techniques he or she will do so. Choices regarding which interpretive practices to employ are not necessarily made in advance.* (Denzin & Lincoln 1998 p. 4)[94]

In this role, the researcher is seeking to identify and even create patterns that at first were not apparent. This process underlines the need for researchers to be flexible and utilise research methodologies as dictated by the ongoing exploration of the material and not to restrict themselves to a formulaic analysis that might provide structure and process, but result in material being discarded or not recognised as holding something of importance to the emergent narrative. This openness to the potentialities in such an archive goes hand-in-hand with awareness by the researchers of their own role in shaping the reading of it. Denzin and Lincoln refer to Joe Kincheloe when describing the process:

> *The interpretive bricoleur understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting. The critical bricoleur stresses the dialectical and hermeneutic nature of interdisciplinary inquiry, knowing that the boundaries that previously*

[92] (Guba and Lincoln 2005)
[93] (Becker 1998)
[94] (Denzin and Lincoln 2005)

> *separated traditional disciplines no longer hold (*Kincheloe 2001, p.683[95] in Denzin & Lincoln 2005 p. 6).[96]

In that context, my own background as an MSE is to be noted, because consciously and unconsciously it frames the patterns identified and shaped. However, it also shapes the questions raised, based on experience, study and reflection on the role. Denzin and Lincoln go on to address the relationship between researcher and research field:

> *Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning*. (Denzin & Lincoln 2005 p. 10)

It follows therefore that closeness to the study rather than seeking a more remote objectivity is a benefit because of the sensitivity it brings to the subject studied. It also provides a rationale for the focus on values and meaning that are key components of this study.

In deciding the research methodology for the study, a key issue is how to determine the validity of whatever is elucidated from the data, which in this study is the archive. Qualitative research often triangulates sets of results or outcomes against each other. Laurel Richardson points out that:

> *In triangulation, a researcher deploys different methods - interviews, census data, documents and the like - to 'validate' findings. These methods, however, carry the same domain assumptions that there is a 'fixed point' or an 'object' that can be triangulated.* (Richardson & St Pierre 2005 p. 963)[97]

The concern with a ‘fixed point’ or ‘object’ is characteristic of an interest in explaining issues with certainty and totality. Richardson had pointed out that:

> *The postmodernist context of doubt, then, distrusts all methods equally. No method has a privileged status. But a postmodernist position does allow us to know 'something' without claiming to know everything. Having a partial, local, and historical knowledge is still knowing.* (Richardson 2005 p. 961)

[95] (Kincheloe 2001)
[96] (Denzin & Lincoln 2005)
[97] (Richardson and St Pierre 2005)

This partiality of knowing reflects an understanding of how knowledge is generated. In the postmodern framework, the assumption is that it is impossible to be absolute in one's judgements, or to be all-knowing about something, or indeed, that it is feasible even to interpret accurately what someone provides in terms of testimony in verbal or written materials. Qualitative research struggles with this issue. Having challenged David Hume's views on causation (regularity and contiguity), Ernest House writes:

> *A second event that shaped development in qualitative studies is the changing conception of values, often phrased as the fact-value dichotomy. This dichotomy is the belief that facts refer to one thing and values refer to something totally different. The fact-value dichotomy is a particularly embarrassing problem given that values lie at the heart of evaluation.* (House 2005 p. 1072)[98]

House's observation flags up the issue of values, both those of the researcher and of those being researched into. The notion that facts are 'value-free' can no longer be sustained as greater emphasis is given to the ways in which data is collected and interpreted. Richardson's co-author, Elizabeth Adams St.Pierre writes that:

> *Clearly, postmodern qualitative researchers can no longer think of inquiry simply as a task of making meaning - comprehending, understanding, getting to the bottom of the phenomenon under investigation.… this does not mean they reject meaning but rather that they put meaning in its place.* (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005 p. 969)[99]

The authors are making the point that putting 'meaning in its place' has usurped a reference to validity in the discussion about what a qualitative researcher is attempting. The focus has shifted to the delicate task of giving meaning to the words used. While structuralism had given value to the study of language in its cultural, community and mythic settings, poststructuralism in a sense reverses the process, and instead of asserting meaning through context, suggests that language creates its own reality. Richardson explains it like this:

> *Poststructuralism links language, subjectivity, social organization and power. The centre piece is language. Language does not 'reflect' social reality but rather produces meaning and creates social reality. Different languages and different discourses within a given*

[98] (House 2005)
[99] (Richardson & St Pierre 2005)

> *language divide up the world and give it meaning in ways that are not reducible to one another. Language is how social organization and power are defined and contested and the place where one's sense of self - one's subjectivity - is constructed. Understanding language as competing discourses - competing ways of giving meaning and of organizing the world - makes language a site of exploration and struggle.* (Richardson & St Pierre 2005 p. 961)

The authors are asserting that any once-for-all interpretation is no longer valid. It is replaced by an on-going process of constant review and exploration of possibilities of meaning. The researcher is required to recognise that not only is the data subjective, but it is reflective of the experiences and patterns of communication available to the research contributor. It suffers from the limitations of the individuals' abilities to communicate, but also the constraints the individuals may be aware of in telling their experiences in a way that they think the hearer either should hear or is capable of hearing. What is said or written therefore has gone through a myriad of conscious and unconscious mediations before it is ever presented to the researcher, with unspoken contradictions and confusions hidden by a flow of words, or even by silence. The researcher, in choosing what to use as examples in the research, also goes through these processes and needs to acknowledge them.

If words therefore are the centre of the study, and the task is how to give meaning to them, the position of the writer becomes critical. Not only is there the need to unravel the possible meanings of the subject, but here is the necessary burden of developing sufficient self-awareness to undertake the task. The researcher also has to produce words and to write them down. Richardson lays out the charge like this:

> *Specifically, poststructuralism suggests two important ideas to qualitative writers. First it directs us to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times. Second, it frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone. Nurturing our own voices releases the censorious hold of 'science writing' on our consciousness as well as the arrogance it fosters in our psyche; writing is validated as a method of knowing.* (Richardson & St Pierre 2005 p. 962)

The question then is, what is it that can become known through this more ‘conscious’ writing? As there is no single interpretation of a text, no final text, and no final word on something, the writer/researcher needs to be clear about the process being used in order to write reflectively. Central to this, and combined with the capacity to understand oneself reflectively, the writer needs to operate as if using a crystal or prism to break open the different meanings that might be hiding in a given text or a given piece of data. Richardson describes the process as:

> *I propose that the central imaginary for 'validity' for postmodernist texts is not the triangle - a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. ... Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose - not triangulation but rather crystallization.* (Richardson & St Pierree 2005 p. 963)

This description outlines the task of the researcher and emphasizes also one simple point: that the position the researcher adopts, hopefully consciously, but to a degree unconsciously, will determine what is seen and therefore what is reported and ultimately, how it is evaluated. This provides a flexibility of approach, but also challenges the researcher to achieve a degree of comprehensiveness to demonstrate that the task has been taken seriously. It is not simply about choosing different angles to address the issue, but enabling a process by which angles are exposed by turning the materials. This positioning of the researcher and rotating of the materials to examine the different facets is what Richardson calls crystallization:

> *Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of 'validity'; we feel how there is no single truth, and we see how texts validate themselves. Crystallization provides us with deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know.* (Richardson & St Pierre 2005 p. 963)

As Richardson points out, the process of crystallization replaces the more traditional notion of validity. Crystallisation gives the researcher and the research

reader confirmation that the process has been honest and undertaken with integrity.

However, what crystallisation does not do is give the researcher specific criteria by which to undertake this reflective analysis. Such criteria are essential to guide the researcher, but also to demonstrate the authenticity of the work. Guba and Lincoln, knowing this to be an issue, suggested the following:

> *Those authenticity criteria - so called because we believed them to be hallmarks of authentic, trustworthy, rigorous, or 'valid' constructivist or phenomenological inquiry - were fairness, ontological authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity. Fairness was thought to be a quality of balance; that is, all stakeholder views, perspectives, claims, concerns, and voices should be apparent in the text. ... this fairness was defined by deliberate attempts to prevent marginalization, to act affirmatively with respect to inclusion, and to act with energy to ensure that all voices in the inquiry effort had a chance to be represented in any texts and to have their stories treated fairly and with balance.*
>
> *Ontological and educative authenticity were designated as criteria for determining a raised level of awareness, in the first instance, by individual research participants and, in the second, by individuals about those who surround them or with whom they come into contact for some social or organizational purpose. ... Catalytic and tactical authenticities refer to the ability of a given inquiry to prompt, first, action on the part of research participants and, second, the involvement of the researcher/evaluator in training participants in specific forms of social and political action if participants desire such training.* (Guba & Lincoln 2005 p. 207)[100]

The authors are seeking to determine not just the authenticity of the researchers' data collection and analysis, but are emphasizing the need to see research in terms of its outcomes, especially as an agent for social change and education. Importantly therefore for these authors, one way of validating such research is to assess if the researcher examined what the applied outcomes might be. Research therefore is not simply discovery, but also potential action. Of particular concern to this study are the issues of fairness and ontology. Given the almost accidental way in which MSE has developed and lack of structured response ecclesiologically these two issues are of particular relevance in illuminating the gathered archive.

[100] (Guba & Lincoln 2005)

Fairness is a concern because the group of people being studied are marginalized and struggle to believe that their voice is heard or even can be heard. It is essential therefore to give the material every chance to project the participants' voice into the policy arena. Only by being scrupulously fair to all the stakeholders will that be possible. This is why the ontology criterion is important. In considering what the essence of MSE consists of in the expressions given to it, one is not dealing with a single ontology but several, if not many. Keeping that option open will enable the richness of the material to be properly explored and revealed. One way of doing that is to examine the material for underlying concepts and theories that may have emerged as a consequence of the development of this new role.

2.4 Grounded theology

2.4.1 Grounded theory

In their seminal work Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss argued that qualitative research had the capacity to formulate theory. They wanted to distinguish between various approaches to theory generation so as to give validity to a range of different ways of undertaking research:

> *... we use the word grounded here to underline the point that the formal theory we are talking about must be contrasted with 'grand' theory that is generated from logical assumptions and speculations about the 'oughts' of social life.* (Glaser & Strauss 1967 pp 34-5)[101]

Kathy Charmaz, writing nearly forty years later, reflected that:

> *A constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 1990, 2000a, 2003b; Charmaz & Mitchells 2001) adopts grounded theory guidelines as tools but does not subscribe to the objectivist, positivist assumptions in its earlier formulations. A constructivist approach emphasizes the studied phenomenon rather than the methods of studying it. Constructivist grounded theorists take a reflexive stance on modes of knowing and representing studied life. This means giving close attention to empirical realities and collected renderings of them - and locating oneself in those realities. It does not assume that data simply awaits discovery in an external world or that methodological procedures will correct limited views of the studied world. Nor does it assume that impartial observers enter the research scene without an*

[101] (Glaser and Strauss 1967)

> *interpretive frame of reference. Instead, what observers see and hear depends upon their prior interpretive frames, biographies, and interests as well as the research context, their relationships with research participants, concrete field experiences, and modes of generating and recording empirical data.* (Charmaz 2005 p. 509)[102]

It is this approach that provides the framework for research strategies in this study that have already been proposed. The focus is strongly on the experiences reported by individuals and includes my encounter with those reports. It also assumes a theological perspective as the individuals whose reports are being studied are undertaking this role with certain assumptions about a God and their response to the calling they experience in this faith setting. It is by utilising certain theological approaches that a 'grounded' theological approach is pursued. These theological approaches include two major foci: narrative theology and contextual theology.

2.4.2 Narrative theology

Given the lack of previous study of MSE and the associated ecclesiology, a valuable resource are the accounts of MSEs which have been collected in the archive. Much of the archive used in this study therefore could be described as narrative. It is made up of accounts by individuals of their experiences, usually placed in a reflective context. David Tracy addresses this scenario when he writes that:

> *Each theologian addresses three distinct and related social realities: the wider society, the academy and the church.* (Tracy 1981 p. 5)[103]

The MSEs in this study see their lives in these social realities. Though many of them might be surprised to see themselves described as theologians, their training and *modus operandi* indicates that such a title is appropriate. This gives emphasis to the need for a multi-focal approach to such a study. The focus on narrative and theology as a unitary process will help to illuminate the content of the archive as it reveals the stories, or perhaps more accurately, the histories of the individuals concerned. It is through the individuals' stories/histories that the significance of

[102] (Charmaz 2005)
[103] (Tracy 1981)

their lives, work and calling can be understood. Alasdair MacIntyre explains the importance of narrative in these terms:

> *Narrative history of a certain kind turns out to be the basic and essential genre for the characterization of human actions.* (MacIntyre 1989 p .94)[104]

He goes on:

> *It is because we all live our narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. Stories are lived before they are told - except in the case of fiction.* (MacIntyre 1989 p. 97)

He adds:

> *A central thesis then begins to emerge: a man is in his actions and practice, as well as his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal. He is not essentially, but becomes through his history, a teller of stories that aspire to truth. ... Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions and words. Hence there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources. Mythology in its original sense, is at the heart of things.* (MacIntyre 1989 pp 101-2)

The stories being told by MSEs are attempts to describe and also identify a truth, sought honestly, that can be shared. However, to evaluate and appreciate them, Michael Root points out that:

> *The connections that hold a narrative together are not necessary connections. ... Grasping or following a narrative does involve seeing how one episode fittingly relates to another. But such a grasp does not involve a perception that this and nothing else could have followed. In fact, an aspect of a relatively complete grasp of a narrative is often a perception of just how easily something else might appropriately or fittingly have occurred.* (Root 1989 p. 272)[105]

This appreciation of how something else might have legitimately happened is how the honesty of the narrative is brought to light. Through the understanding that the account offered is only one of other likely accounts offered, it is possible to confront the significance of its solitary nature as an account and to determine that this one narrative is of itself important.

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[104] (MacIntyre 1989)
[105] (Root 1989)

Narrative plays a major part in the understanding and even the 'doing' of theology. MSEs are ordained minsters and therefore bring with them an intellectual framework that includes certain understandings of faith and God. Stanley Hauerwas and David Burrell begin to address the challenge inherent in this position when they write that:

> *We cannot account for our moral life solely by decisions we make; we also need the narrative that forms us to have one kind of character rather than another. These narratives are not arbitrarily acquired, although they will embody many factors we might consider 'contingent'. As our stories, however, they will determine what kind of moral considerations - that is reasons - will count at all.* (Hauerwas & Burrell 1989 p. 167)[106]

Further:

> *It is exactly the category of narrative that helps us to see that we are forced to choose between some universal standpoint and subjectivistic appeals to our own experience. For our experiences always come in the form of narratives that can be checked against themselves as well as against others' experiences. I cannot make my behaviour mean anything I want it to mean, for I have learned to understand my life from stories I have learned from others*. (Hauerwas & Burrell 1989 p. 168)

In the case of the MSEs, it is their theological background and sense of calling that relates their stories to the stories of faith and ministry that they have heard in their upbringing, training and pastoral experiences. Narrative theology therefore enables the content of the given narratives to be framed and then contextualised by the backgrounds from which the individuals concerned have emerged and use as their foundational assertions when providing a rationale for their accounts.

2.4.3 Contextual theology

Contextualisation is a key underpinning in how to understand and evaluate the archive. This contextualisation acts in a complementary fashion to Castells' [107] perspective on how society now functions. Contextual theology has been used to bring a geographic perspective to thinking about church and the role of those within it. However, it has a wider function that Callum Brown summarises as:

[106] (Hauerwas and Burrell 1989)
[107] (Castells 1996)

> *Contextual theology is concerned to recognise all theology as particular, and is aware that claims to universality are most frequently made by the privileged and those who control the dominant narratives by which societies, communities and churches live.* (Brown 2001 p. 4)[108]

He makes the further point that:

> *When we speak of contextual theology, how is context understood? Frequently, it is taken to imply geographical location. Of course, location is not only about geography but embraces other ways of rejecting claims of universality.* (Brown 2001 p. 14)

The strength of contextual theology is therefore to help to identify what sources have become the dominant factors and the controlling features of the institutional narrative. By identifying them and how they have achieved their influence, they assist in the analysis of those sources and assess how other narratives are either received or rejected. The value of contextual theology as a tool is that within the postmodern assertions of Castells'[109] model is the assumption of certain parameters about society. These include the notion of perpetual free choice, supported by the resources to make such choices. Malcolm Brown observes:

> *Too many enthusiasts of postmodernism neglect the power of those economic imperatives which drive postmodernity, and so fail to develop an adequate account of marginalisation or see how reconfiguring space as 'flows' serves to disempower those whom capitalism takes to be of no account.* (Brown 2005 p. 23)[110]

MSEs are themselves on the fringe of the institution and often seem to be engaged in their work with people who are themselves outwith the institution. It is vital therefore to examine the archive from that contextual perspective and use such an approach to illuminate the roles played while placing them in relation to the expectations of the institution. It is at this point that overlap occurs with the premises of liberation theology where the focus is on marginalised and excluded people. Such foci will be born in mind in the analysis in the next chapter.

2.5 Conclusion

The methodology used in this study has been designed to capture both the content and context of the role and reported activities of MSEs. This has been

[108] (Brown 2005)
[109] (Castells 1996)
[110] (Brown 2005)

done so as to shine a light on the ecclesiology within which MSEs are undertaking their roles. The underlying assumption is that the Church of England remains primarily a geographically based organisation settled around its parish structure, with the parish priest in the normative ordained role. MSEs therefore stand apart in the sense that while often attached to parish structures, their prime function is not necessarily to support and sustain this parish structure. This degree of 'outsideness' has the capacity to illuminate both what is going on within the structure, but also to point to potential new directions in ecclesiology.

The use of Castells'[111],[112] works enables questions to be asked about the nature of the organisational logic that operates within the church, and in particular to see whether the manner in which MSEs have changed and developed their ways of working, is reflected in their experience of the church that commissions them. Castells posits that the organisational logic relates to the use of IT, not just in terms of computers, but across the whole panoply of developments, including the impact of micro-surgery, on the way lives are led. IT impacts on the speed of communication, the ability to work in different time spheres, the breakdown of the notion of the working day, and even the understanding that one does not have to go to work to be at work. Examination of such issues, Castells argues, illuminates both the culture and the institutional context within which people are expected to work in particular organisations. Castells points to these being global phenomena and demonstrates the reality of the impact of globalisation on the way that organisations operate. A key part of this is to examine the developments of networks in organisations. Castells emphasises the significance of horizontal rather than vertical network development and introduces his concept of the 'Space of Flows', which he describes as time-sharing social practices. This includes not only work, but addresses the ways in which individuals' entire lives are led. The focus here is on individualism and the new groupings arising from these 'time-sharing social practices'. The archive collected for this study can be examined to

[111] (Castells 1989)
[112] (Castells 1996)

determine if these changes are reported by MSEs and to see if, and how, the changes indicated are reflected in their experience of church life. It may also illuminate some of what Castells refers to as 'dominant structures' i.e. the way in which the internal logic or organisations and institutions shape the social practices and social consciousness of society at large. This is of particular relevance in the Church of England with its mission to all people and the haphazard decision-making processes adopted especially by its bishops.

As Castells' (1989, 1996) works are central to examining the context of the archive, so Richardson and St Pierre's[113] 'crystallization' process is key to examining the socio-geographic content of the archive. Because of the 'outsider' position of MSEs in relation to their organisation, there is an assumption of discontinuity that of itself can illuminate the organisation. Crystallization allows the deconstruction of supposed single truths and allows the text to validate the different truths embedded in it. It requires the researcher to approach the archive reflectively and adopt certain criteria to determine the authenticity of the text. Richardson indicated that the criteria were important, but this is the more comprehensive list to be adopted are:

- Fairness, which might be better characterised as balance
- Ontology, which is an examination of the degree of self-awareness revealed in the text
- Educative, which is the awareness of social purpose as revealed in the text
- Catalytic, which points to the ability to prompt action or research within the content of the text
- Tactical, which is examination of engagement with social action

Used reflectively, these criteria interact allowing the researcher to return repeatedly to elements of the archive to re-examine the content for new insights.

[113] (Richardson & St Pierre 2005)

Given that the archive concerns individuals in their roles as ministers in the Church of England it is clear that a theological lens is also needed to examine its content. To fit with the other two approaches (narrative and contextual theology) that have been chosen, and in order to allow the archive to speak for itself and to illuminate areas of thinking about this subject not previously addressed, a grounded theology approach has been adopted. It is to allow the inherent theological content of the archive to emerge that such an approach is being used. A contextual theological approach is one that is more process oriented than aiming to identify specific theologies because it allows the significance of the context of the material to be examined. It also relates well to the narrative nature of much of the archive, enabling it to be examined internally, rather than seeking to be able to ascribe such material to some pre-existing theological tradition.

In summary, the approach chosen has two fundamental elements. The first is to examine the archive as a tool that might offer some insight into an institution placed in a world where major changes in terms of organisation and work, and life at large, have occurred. This is reflected in highly developed systematisation of decision-making depending on evidence, involvement of those concerned with the outcomes and transparency. This very public pattern of behaviour, open to challenge and accessible through shared information systems stands in stark contrast to idiosyncratic decision-making processes adopted in relation to the study subject by the bishops. The second fundamental element is to look closely at the archive to enable it to speak for itself; to seek in it those insights that open windows on the roles of MSEs as well as the life of the institution in which they exist. While the first places the archive in its social context, the second reveals the content in terms of individual experience and institutional response and touches upon different understandings of organisation and institution. The approach therefore has a degree of reflexivity as process and experience are compared in the light of individual accounts of undertaking MSE roles. The archive, which is examined next shows both the institutional experience of individuals and raises questions about the way in which the role has been received in the institution.

Chapter 3

Analysis of the archive: Examination of the lived experience

3.1 Introduction

The archive used in this study can be seen as a two-way activity. Going in reveals the lived experiences of some individuals who have felt themselves called to live a life as an MSE. Arising from the archive and therefore with a sense of being outside it, insights are gained into the nature of the institution that houses the role of MSEs. Together, these approaches illuminate the social context of the role and the institutional response. The archive represents the lived experience of this role. Within the methodology described in the last chapter, the responses provide the material for the deep exploration of the role of MSE and the prism through which the nature of the church can be examined. In particular the examination rests on looking at the ways in which some individuals have united lifestyle and belief in order to achieve the delivery of a particular role in the Church of England. Uniting a lifestyle and belief demands an integration of character and activity, as described by James McClendon:

> *The suggestion is that having character, being a person of some character, is one precondition of making responsible choices. Having character is part of what we have in mind when we distinguish the moral or immoral acts of persons from the merely mechanical or biological activity of things or animals. ... for character is just that connection*

> *of purpose and policy and individual actions that makes possible motivation of any sort (as opposed to conditioned reflexes).* (McClendon 1974 p. 16)[114]

It is right to look for this combination of facets in the archive. The questions therefore posed are, what made these individuals pursue these roles; what was it about them that led them to this activity; and how did they cope with the institution's response, or lack of it?

To deepen this line of reflection Kwame Anthony Appiah addressed the tension that arises between personal expectation and sense of right to describe oneself in one's own terms. The individual needs to be recognised in role and function by the people to whom the role and function has to relate. Appiah wrote:

> *Now, many people have the idea that the normative content of an identity should be determined essentially by its bearers. Even if it's true - which I doubt, since recognition by people of other identities is often a proper source of their meaning - this would still mean that some people would have the content of their identities determined in part by others; namely, those of the same identity.* (Appiah 2005 p. 67)[115]

In assessing the archive it will be important to remember this because as Mantle identified in his study of the first group of worker priests in the 1950s and 60s, the issue of definition and role determination was a constant battle both within the group and outside of it:

> *But Britain's first worker-priests were reluctant to describe themselves as a movement of worker-priests, though they often embraced a measure of publicity and certainly accepted and used the title 'worker-priest'. For them it had at least one distinct meaning: it described a priest generally from a middle-class background, conventionally trained for the priesthood but who had chosen as a vocation to move into a world of exclusively manual labour directly on the shop-floor, skilled or unskilled but never above the 'rank' of chargehand.* (Mantle 2000 p. 213)[116]

As Mantle describes, this definition of role and function, which constituted the MSEs' identities, was hard won in the group and had a tendency to break down. Even though their number never exceeded a large hand full, the definitional

[114] (McClendon 1974)
[115] (Appiah 2005)
[116] (Mantle 2000)

problems were inherited by the MSEs trained on the newly devised courses from the 1960s onwards. The experience of the first generation of worker priests underlined the need to recognise that there is often a difference between the role and title aspired to and the one imposed by the social context of the role. Appiah commented on this sort of problem from his perspective in psychology and sociology when he wrote:

> *Because identities are constituted in part by social conceptions and by treatment - as, in the realm of identity there is no bright line between recognition and imposition.* (Appiah 2005 p. 110)

Appiah emphasised the need to recognise that no matter how individuals set about defining what their role and function makes them, a vitally important part is the way in which role definitions are attributed, especially by others in the same or related roles. He helpfully explains that pursuit of such role and self-definition relates directly to rationale for action by individuals:

> *Identities give those who have them reasons for action ...* (Appiah 2005 p. 184)

The need for clarity of role definition and shared ownership of that definition is therefore critical if practitioners are to be able to find their place in the institution and serve its goals appropriately.

In examining the data, three significant themes emerged that clarify aspects of identity, role and function; all three are possibly interrelated: The Church, Priesthood, and Parish. These three can be subdivided for the purposes of examination into:

1. The Church
    1.1. MSEs' views about the Church
    1.1. MSEs' views' on the perceptions of others about the Church and its identity
2. Priesthood
    2.1. MSEs' views on priesthood
    2.2. The role and function of MSEs
    2.3. The priesthood of baptism
3. Parish
    3.1. MSEs' roles in relation to a parish

3.2. Responses to MSEs by parishioners and parish priests

The interrelatedness of the themes arises because the notions themselves are broad and used in many different ways. However, the interrelatedness also reflects the richness of both the subject and the process of the analysis and therefore there is as much danger of excluding issues that may prove to be important as struggling to give meaning by excluding data.

3.2 Theme 1: The Church

RJ, a teacher and priest said:

> *I come into contact with a very, very large number of people who would never think of setting foot inside of a church. That I think is a tremendous opportunity. It is a wonderful opportunity because many of the lads that I see, many of the staff that I know, would no more think of belonging to a church group or setting foot inside a church than, how can one say it, sort of disregard all the requirements of the law. They would consider it just something which they would not do. So, one comes into very close contact and is dealing with matters which, in many instances, these people would never talk about in a general way. So that, it is a completely different area, a completely separate area from the folk that I meet on Sundays mostly.* (Interview 1, 1983-4 p. 16-17)

This type of comment occurs frequently in the interviews and 'free space' comments made on questionnaires. Sunday church life (with its associated activities), is often seen as being a world away from the environment with which MSEs normally engage with the people who are workmates, colleagues, or as above, students. This is reflected in the wide literature on this subject.[117],[118],[119],[120] The views expressed by RJ are complex as they combine his own views about the church with those of the people with whom he works. It is valuable therefore to try and distinguish between these two foci and to elicit a sense of emphasis and range of commentary.

3.2.1 MSEs' views about the church

RJ again:

[117] (Roberts 1972)
[118] (Syms 1979)
[119] (Hacking 1990)
[120] (Syms 1998)

> *I find that I am constantly having to ask myself questions as to what I'm doing and why I'm doing it. I'm constantly having to find answers. Put it simply this way, that in many church circles there are questions which just wouldn't arise. Outside those church circles they do.* (Interview 1,1983-4 p. 17)

Observations like this point to the dichotomy of existence experienced by MSEs. The repeating of the phrase 'I am (I'm) constantly having to' points to something significant. There is no suggestion that there is another source that can be consulted, or support that can be approached. The focus on the self gives a perspective of individuals very much on their own, almost, in a sense outside of the institution to which they are affiliated. GM, a military Fire Chief and priest identified a slightly different aspect to this issue:

> *Sometimes, they'll be running the church down and you say, 'Well, hold on a minute. I'm one of these guys. I'm one of these clergy you're shouting about, you know. '"Oh well we didn't mean you. You're, you know, different. Well, you're not different. But you're just in a different situation. But they can't see that.'* (Interview 2, 1983-4 p. 21)

As a priest GM has a strong sense of being part of the institution, but is made very aware of being perceived to be different. A tension of identity arises therefore; GM is seen differently to the way he sees himself. This begins to build a picture that runs through this material of what might be described as strong ownership of having been licensed by the church, but knowing what it feels like being on the margins of the church. PB, MH, MV were all planning officers, interviewed together. One of them makes the following comment and the other two do not dissent:

> *… who I am and what I represent is very much accepted at work. I don't have to justify to them why I am at work. It is adequate to say that in a sense I am, we are, the church coming out to the world but we're also somehow in reverse and perhaps more importantly trying to tell the church about the world and about the situations and that's probably a darn sight harder than bringing the church into County Hall in the way that people see it.* (Interview 9, 1983-4 p.13)

This group of priests share the commitment of the two in the previous interviews, but this time point up two other recurrent themes. The first is the ready acceptance of MSEs in the workplace. All three had been ordained and without announcing their change of status in church terms to their employers and work colleagues, had

become known as people who could be approached about church matters. They undertake this role in different ways and are clearly well received in these roles. The second theme concerns the difficulty of getting the church to understand the world. This is more than controversial because the church is predominantly made up of laity, i.e. those people who live and work in the world. What these interviewees seem to be saying is that the voice of the laity as a voice of (or possibly better expressed as from) the church or about the world, is not heard, or perhaps even more significantly, does not play a role in the life of the church. Additionally, the church does not seem to have the mind-set that permits it to receive insight into the life of the world, even from its own clergy. .

In terms of revealing something of the church, they are echoing Roland Allen:

> *The distinction between stipendiary and voluntary clergy is not a distinction between men who give their whole time to the service of God and His Church and men who give part of their time to that service, but a distinction between one form of service and another. Both stipendiary and voluntary clergy ought to be serving God and the Church all the time in all that they do, but the service which the Church needs that each should do for God and for her is not the same. The voluntary cleric carries the priesthood into the market place and the office. It is his work not only to minister at the altar or to preach, but to show men how the common work of daily life can be done in the spirit of the priest.* (Allen 1930 p. 86)[121]

Allen's arguments from the end of the nineteenth century onwards concerned the church's inability to value anything other than a stipendiary priesthood, and he was deeply concerned about the demands made on the laity to surrender to such leadership and indeed pay for them. He encountered deep resistance to his arguments, which he perceived as arising from the failure of the church to fulfil its mission. Such a grave charge, along with his directness of communication, probably accounts for why his message was rarely taken seriously, at least until after his death. What the last three interviewees quoted are pointing to is how, like Allen, they encounter a blockage in the system, almost like a clot blocking the circulation. This prevents not just the world being heard in church, but also raises

[121] (Allen 1930)

significant questions about what it means to be church. The question is, what sort of church does not 'hear' what its MSEs are trying to communicate?

3.2.2 MSEs' views on the perceptions of others about the church and its identity

> *It does strike me that if ever I try and interpret the church as I see it to the world, you then sort of find yourself making excuses for the sort of churches that some people have around them that seem most unwelcoming to this sort of view or that have put particular people off going there because the vicar's upset them and seemed unwelcoming and a lot of negative things. So there does seem to be a degree of making excuses either for one group of people or for another.* (Interview 9, 1983-4 p. 20)

One of the three interviewees quoted above turns the focus round and identifies common perceptions of the church. This highlights one function many MSEs report that they have: interpreting the church to others. They comment on how few people in the church in their experience want to listen to the nature of the MSE interpretive role and what that tells MSEs, and should tell others about the nature of the church. They indicate the impact of the broadcast of some of Karen Armstrong's thinking (from the dates, probably the documentary for *Channel Four* in 1984, called 'St Paul, the first Christian'), where their workmates indicated that they expected the church to condemn the broadcast and were amazed that that thinking had 'been around a long time'. WC, a career adviser and priest comments:

> *… but occasionally explicitly one gets asked to explain why the church is doing so and so or not doing something else.* (Interview 15, 1983-4 pp 9-10)

Many of the interviewees report the interest of non-church goers in what the church thinks or is doing. Questions are also raised about why it is not doing certain things. This indicates something of the understanding and perception that people have of the church itself, but it also reveals something of the relationship between the church and MSEs. Other people's views unavoidably colour the views of MSEs. Just as parish priests are trained by those already in the role, the MSEs are shaped and formed by those with whom they work. The views of workmates are just as influential on individual perception as the conforming laity would be on the parish priest.

KO, a priest who worked in a senior position in a county council, describes a scenario where a colleague's partner committed suicide. This individual's parents were deeply involved in their own church and he knew all the people concerned:

> *But I had a sense that I ought to go around and see them and it's funny how these things pan out, but I think it was the Tuesday night and I was just saying to my wife 'well I know I've got something else on but I'm just going round there just to …', and so, well the phone rang and it was her dad on the phone saying could I come? And it was simply because she sensed that she could talk to me rather than the vicar. And from that in actual fact really the vicar ministered to the parents and I ministered to her and also again to one or two other people who were close to her in the office.* (Interview 23, 1983-4 p. 4)

Here the MSE is trusted by all parties, but there is some concern about the parish priest being able to care for both the parents who were regular parishioners and a daughter who was outside of that parish relationship. There is no doubt that this is to do with perception, and the parish priest may have been able to care equally well for all concerned, but it points to a belief about the church that emerges in this material of an institution that can care for its own, but seems to exclude those who are not 'regular attenders'. KO had struggled earlier in the interview to characterise his own role as MSE and in the end described it as 'caring', which is something that parish priests see themselves as doing. He emphasises that it is to do with place and so the parish priest is perceived to do it in one place for one group and the MSE for another group in another place. Certainly for KO and many other MSEs, the issue of people's perceptions of the church is a key determinant of how they are seen and are related to in the workplace.

3.3 Theme 2: Priesthood

> *In Britain there were only a handful of worker-priests in the 1950s and 1960s and later non-stipendiary ministries in the middle-class occupations which emerged in the Church of England, had more to do with resolving the manpower shortage and keeping the parochial system going.* (Mantle 2002 p. 213)[122]

Mantle summarised the expectations in the church of MSEs as a new class of ordained ministers who would help to resolve the workforce shortage in parishes;

[122] (Mantle 2002)

a parish auxiliary as he had previously described it. However, there was a second issue that both Vaughan and Mantle came to see as being key to understanding this role: the degree of cognitive dissonance experienced by its practitioners. Vaughan wrote:

> *For ministers in secular employment find themselves non-normative in two situations: in the job situation (the domain of the laity) they are ordained; while in the parish they are ordained, but working in a 'lay' job (not in the parish). It is inherently likely that this 'double bind' will produce strains in the self-perception of individual minsters in secular employment who may then seek to reduce the tension by simplifying their life-style. … Further work needs to be done to explore the extent to which individual ministers in secular employment may experience cognitive dissonance arising from their non-normative roles as 'layman' on the parish staff, and 'clergyman' in the workplace.* (Vaughan 1990 pp 317-8)[123]

Mantle offered similar observations (p. 241-2).[124] Unsurprisingly therefore, the tensions identified by Vaughan and Mantle are central in the discussions about being a priest in the material that contributed to the archive.

3.3.1 MSEs' views on priesthood

CJ, a lecturer in tertiary education makes an observation many MSEs also offer:

> *And quite honestly, lovely people of course and not really understanding the dynamics of the tertiary college and I used to be very angry with the church, with the deanery and all the rest of it, bishops and whatever, fellow priests and all the rest of it. But yet you know when I thought about this earnestly, prayerfully, how could I expect them to be other than the way they did? They weren't particularly anti. They just didn't understand.* (Interview 3, 1983-4 p. 10)

CJ reflects the two concerns of a sense of not being understood and a sense of not belonging. In his interview he describes some of the confusion of his work colleagues as they too adjust to his new role. He conveys clearly the sense of not being properly 'recognised' in either scenario. Importantly, this does not amount to rejection or not being wanted, but rather, what he conveys is a sense of being marginal and wanted in both settings, but not understood or properly valued. This has also been mentioned in more recent interviews, and in one instance, the

[123] (Vaughan 1990)
[124] (Mantle 2000)

interviewee is weeping. The reason for this is always 'no-one has ever listened to me before'. This is characteristic of people living with cognitive dissonance. There is deep commitment and deep emotions, but with few opportunities to share them, as the MSEs try to reconcile contradictory demands and seek a rationalisation for their behaviour.[125]

RJ, a teacher and priest, recounts some experiences of priesthood at work; this is the third such experience:

> *The third one is a strange piece, that a mother, who rejoices in the name of Mrs O'Hagan, (the name is important), came to see me very agitated. She has been deserted by her husband. She has two children: a boy who is in the third year - I'm head of third year - so, she came to see me and said she was having very great difficulties with her son and would I speak to him because the boy had no father to whom he could turn. This didn't present any problem at all but, in the course of the conversation, I said to Mrs O'Hagan, 'Why me, particularly? Why a school master?'*
>
> *'You're not a school master', she said, 'You're a priest. You'll do.* (Interview 1, 1983-4 pp. -3)

Here, a boy's mother expresses the dissonance and resolves it to her own satisfaction. In analysing this, RJ comments:

> *On the third one, I was most impressed because Mrs O'Hagan, as you've probably guessed, is a very devout Roman Catholic but she saw me as part of the universal priesthood and, this again was a very interesting and a new development for me as I'd rather imagined I would be beyond the pale as far as she was concerned.* (Interview 1, 1983-4 p. 3)

This relates to Appiah's[126] issue of role definition and the question of who decides the role definition. In this case, the mother seems to ignore what RJ thought would be two prior definitional calls, to appeal to what he describes as the 'universal priesthood'. He was clearly taken aback by this but not to a degree where he could not provide what was requested. In his work setting, RJ describes some of the roles his colleagues expect him to fulfil:

> *They are aware that I'm a priest. They also know the demands upon me and my relationship with them has changed but, frequently, I'll be sitting in the staff room and a*

[125] (Festinger 1957)
[126] (Appiah 2005)

colleague will sit down beside me and expect me to be there as a counsellor, as a listening ear, and will confide in me and this is growing, so much more so that people are using me in that priestly function. One of the greatest joys I had this last autumn was to baptise the son of one of my colleagues in school. (Interview 1, 1983-4 p. 6)

The Church of Wales had developed a list of roles in a Report on NSM and RJ identifies elements of all of them in his practice. In the list they are:

(a) as an interpreter of the Church to the world, and of the world to the Church;

(b) as an informal teacher, in down-to-earth theology and ethics;

(c) as a counsellor with an understanding of problems born of shared experience;

(d) as a confessor, speaking wisely of repentance and forgiveness;

(e) as a comforter to the distressed and bereaved;

(f) as a reconciler between man and God and between different people, whether as individuals or groups

(g) as an intercessor who prays for all with whom and for whom he works;

(h) as the nucleus for Christian groups. (Working Group on Self-Supporting Ministry 1981 p. 53)[127]

As in nearly every interview in the archive, RJ indicated that to some degree or other he did all of these.

3.3.2 The role and function of MSEs

The above list of eight potential roles is central to any assessment of MSE role and function. The Church of Wales study had focused on:

(a) the role and scope of this sort of ministry;

(b) possible age limits for ordination;

(c) appropriate courses of pre- and post-ordination study;

(d) mobility in ministry; and

(e) any other pertinent matter. (Working Group on Self-Supporting Ministry 1981 p. 1)

In the summary of conclusions in the Church of Wales Report there are only two references to the activity of work:

(5) Ministry in workplaces is still embryonic and requires more support from all levels of the Church

(6) SSM clerics might join chaplaincy and other teams, give specialist attention to particular groups and become the nucleus for small Christian communities in the workplace.

(Working Group on Self-Supporting Ministry 1981 p. 33)

[127] (Working Group on Self-Supporting Ministry. 1981)

In reading the Report, it is clear that the focus is on how to meet the marked short fall of stipendiary parochial clergy. Despite that, the respondents' comments about the reality of such ministry come through strongly, as in this teacher/priest observations:

> *The SSM cannot divorce himself from his secular employment, forgetting he is a priest for eight or nine hours each day.* (Working Group on Self-Supporting Ministry 1981 p.10)

Throughout the Report, the respondents and indeed the committee submitting the Report are keen to emphasise the need for a clear role definition and with it, differentiation from the parochial role. It is important therefore to note the number of suggestions about how people in professional roles in organisations could also fulfil a chaplaincy role while undertaking their primary occupation. This does seem to be inherently contradictory. While seeking role clarification in the church setting, it is acceptable to be proposing deliberate role confusion in the work setting! The Report therefore reads like an exercise in cost-shifting, both in establishing self-supporting priests whose only income from the church is expenses, and in using time paid for by an employer to engage in the purpose for which the individual was hired, and yet to provide authorised chaplaincy services in the name of the church.

This constraint in the thinking of the church is reflected in other sources. One interviewee describes a key characteristic of the role as being 'embedded' (MH Interview 9, 1983-4 p. 27), that is, so integrated in the workplace that the fact of ordination becomes seen as part of the resources of a department. The contrast therefore between the expectations of the church and realities of MSE life is very marked. The role boundaries seem to have evaporated, the employment role of MH (engineer) has melded in the eyes of colleagues with the nature of the personal resources the individual brings to work, which includes sacramental provision as well as the roles listed above. The work roles of MSEs in the archive range widely, yet all of them express this experience of absorption into the workplace, with ordination being seen as an added extra that their workplace settings can not only accommodate, but is valued and integrated into the routine of life in that place or setting.

G, a psychiatric consultant, describes how his colleagues still elected him to chair the medical committee despite knowing about his comparatively new position as a priest:

> *I think the encouraging thing is that it happened [the chairmanship] despite my ordination because I mean if anyone had wanted to be awkward or show sour grapes they could have blocked my appointment. So I mean I see that really as a measure of confidence that people have in me despite my ordination.* (Interview 24 1983-4 p. 6)

The 'added extra' in this case was being able to mediate with a less than responsive chaplaincy team. G also identifies parts of his role in all of the functions described earlier, apart from acting as a confessor, where he perceives role conflict with his function as a psychiatrist. The potential for cognitive dissonance in this combination of priest and psychiatrist is significant. He describes new situations emerging and his reason is that ordination has given him 'authority' (Interview 24 1983-4 .p. 13). Objectively observed, this is a remarkable comment because by any measure, being a consultant with the powers of a mental health act to support one's judgements, and the chairmanship of the most significant committee in the hospital, all speak of 'authority'. However, for G they clearly represent a different authority, and authority of a lower order.

Anon talks about:

> *… the ordination and people are aware of this and then people are glad to sort of use you as a kind of mediator is it, or an interpreter or something like that?* (Interview 23, 1983-4 p. 1)

This highlights another phenomenon of how, even where the nature and significance of ordination are not fully understood or comprehended, the role and function of an MSE flourishes. Anon describes it as people being 'closer' (Interview 23, 1983-4 p. 1). JM takes this further when struggling to explain the difference between laity in the workplace and someone who is ordained:

> *Perhaps in one respect there is a difference which is known to me and not to many others and that is the Eucharist, I feel I am bringing to the altar and indeed to the very consecration itself, much of what has rubbed off on me in my job and in the world in which I*

> *am operating, and in that respect it's very meaningful to me. I can offer at the Eucharist as a priest much of what a layman cannot offer.* (Interview 22, 1983-4 p. 9)

This is an observation offered many times in the archive. The difference is expressed in the actual crossover in roles where the world of work is brought into the life of the church community. Nicholas Healy offers an insight into this:

> *A number of theologians have noted how this doctrine [of the Trinity] requires us to keep shifting our perspective so that we view a theological locus like the doctrine of the church in relation to one and then another person of the Trinity, as well as the Trinity as such.* (Healy 2000 p. 34)[128]

The need to shift perspective to understand how events are seen either from the situation of the church community or from the orientation of the work setting points to the need to bear in mind the theological relationship between the nature of the church and the essential nature of the relationships within the Trinity, a fundamental component of the belief in the Christian tradition. While reflecting the lack of understanding by the church of the MSE role and function the interviewees are engaged in, a deeper theological process is being undertaken by the MSEs, in a setting away from the parish, which orients Christian life into daily living and therefore one which will induce uncertainty and confusion both among the practitioners and the institution that houses them. The focus of MSEs is therefore potentially threatening to the traditions and expectations of the normative parish priests that they relate to and the institution of the church.

WC, a careers adviser comments that:

> *I quite enjoy the duality of the role of being concerned with issues in the world and at the same time having the powerhouse of the body of Christ behind me and acting as this kind of bridge between the two worlds which one for the moment pretends are separate, I don't think they are.* (Interview 15, 1983-4 p. 19)

The metaphor of a bridge is often used in the literature on MSE, with the church seeing MSEs as a bridge into the world and MSEs believing that they are bridging the world back into the church. WC questions the validity of the assumption that the work is unidirectional, i.e. MSE to the world or MSE bringing the world to the

[128] (Healy 2000)

church, as he perceives both processes going on together and needing each other to underpin the activity. However, he does believe that the institution of the church in the representation of the local incumbent can be intolerant of the laity because of lack of empathy with the demands of a life that incorporates both work and church. He suggests that a certain primacy is given to church matters and that it is not helpful when monocular-visioned parish priests demonstrate no sensitivity to the realities of this other 'life' of the laity, let alone their MSE colleagues. Sparks of anger come through in the archive, illuminating the depth of feeling and the cognitive dissonance being experienced.

3.3.3 The priesthood of baptism

In the Christian tradition, baptism is not just an initiation but entry into the 'royal priesthood'.

> *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.* 1 Peter 2.9

In his text on vocation, Gordon Kuhrt[129] indicated how the Reformation challenged the hierarchical nature of clerical priesthood. Kuhrt described baptism as the 'ordination of the laity', thus confirming a theological position that gives all baptised Christians a role in priesthood, both that of Christ and of the church. For MSEs this helps to place them in the workplace where there are Christians and non-Christians, but also within the institution of the church where their positions challenge the assumed hierarchy of ordained as set against non-ordained Christians. For many MSEs, the natural alliance (without putting it too strongly) is with the laity rather than the other ordained ministers. JC, an architect, describes his ministry in these terms:

> *I think realistically I would have to say that if I have a work ministry at all it is purely that this is how a Christian, an ordained Christian, approaches being an architect.* (Interview 25, 1983-4 p. 1)

He expands, when asked particularly about the role of comforter (item (e) on the list of MSE activities in the workplace) played by many ordained priests:

[129] (Kuhrt 2000)

> *The comforter, number five, and those situations, I mean do arise in any everyday continuing relationship. People, as I say, reveal little bits of themselves but that sort of, I would have thought, was more of a Christian ministry rather than a specifically ordained thing.* (Interview 25, 1983-4 p. 7)

RW, a manager for a freight forwarding company, says something very similar:

> *I would hope that I'm trying to be the Christian conscience in an otherwise secular environment and the voice of a Christian must be if we are, I do honestly believe, if we are to make this nation any better than it is now.* (Interview 12, 1983-4 p. 10)

This begins to identify a parting from a tradition that has identified clergy as separate and different from other Christians. Michael Ranken highlights this in a text originally published in 1982 when the early MSEs were seeking to understand where their ordained roles fitted in the traditional parish-based church structure:

> *… we share the ministry which is that of all believers, of all who are sensitive to God's way in the world and to try to follow it, with or without using the church's symbols.* (Ranken 1982 p.282)[130]

This observation was very influential. It drew on a significant passage of a document known as the Welsby Report:

> *What we have already said of the biblical and primitive occupations of the ministry of the Church should make it clear that we do not ourselves believe that holiness of the minister ought to be related to his abstaining from secular employment. While there is a sense in which a person is 'set apart' for a particular ministry, a proper understanding of the Christian doctrine of creation will lead to the recognition that this is not essentially incompatible with his participation in any activity which is not bad in itself. This applies in general to the baptismal vocation, which is worked out while still living in the world, although it is not completely inexplicable in terms of the world; and in particular of the priestly vocation, which may be worked out by a man still engaged in secular activities (whether as his means of livelihood or not) although it is not completely explicable in terms of those activities.* (Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry 1968 p.15)[131]

This highlights a concern prevalent in the church as the thinking about MSEs began to emerge. The Welsby Report quotes Bishop Winnington-Ingram, a former Bishop of London, who said in the Convocation debate of 1932 that:

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[130] (Ranken 1998)
[131] (Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry 1968)

> *The laity did not want to see somebody in that position on Sunday when they were doing business with him on Monday.* (Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry 1968 pp 14-15)

This raises the question of holiness and purity, which the Welsby Report dismissed by pointing to a fuller understanding of the doctrine of the incarnation and the significance of baptism as the true gateway to ministry. This focus on doctrinal interpretation points to an unaddressed shift in thinking about the nature of clergy rather than priesthood. Without detailed exploration, it was recognition that the traditional expectations of the parish-focused church (in the sense of practice in the last two hundred years or so), needed to be challenged, not just because of a new or different type of minister. The doctrinal underpinning of the notions of priesthood and clergy were less than sound, or more correctly, insufficiently explored to accommodate and then properly use the new MSEs and use the laity more actively. Over time a sense had grown especially in the new parishes of the nineteenth century in the new towns of the Victorian era, of separation and difference between clergy, laity and clerical provision outside of that setting that could not be sustained. However, as Greenwood wrote, the thinking captured by the Welsby Report did not take root rapidly in the Church of England:

> *It is so easy for the clergy, who put so much time and emotional energy into the institutional church for so many reasons, to convince ourselves that the church is a community when it is actually nothing of the sort. Also, at the very time when some are wanting to rediscover the Church's corporate identity there is a prevailing attitude in society which enjoys the privacy that prosperity brings, upholds the right to religious opinion as opposed to creed, but which is totally immersed in work, family and leisure pursuits and prefers to see the church as a chaplaincy to be dropped in on when required.* (Greenwood 1988 pp 46-7)[132]

Greenwood goes on to lament the failure of the church to utilise NSMs appropriately: they were turned into parish auxiliaries rather than exploiting their potential as MSEs. It is ironic that what Greenwood was complaining about was also core to the findings of Theresa Morgan in her more recent study.[133] While it is

[132] (Greenwood 1988)
[133] (Morgan 2010)

attractive to seek one's own identity, the challenge revealed in the archive goes beyond the wish to negotiate a different role, and enters into how church doctrine has been read as a means of supporting particular interpretations of priesthood. This is in line with Appiah's thinking.[134] In the field of ordained priesthood, the separateness manifests itself as being a need to distinguish priests from the unordained laity, rather than an understanding of separate but complementary callings.

> *There is little sign of a new springtime for the Church in so many places where - under clerical domination the old structures are slowly grinding to a halt, and where there is no vision at hand to replace them. Yet perversely it is often in these quarters that criticism is strongest of the invitation to collaborative ministry and of a challenging vision of the local church as a corporate agent of mission.* (Greenwood 1988 p. 76)[135]

This combination of needing to distinguish different types of ordained ministers, as well as assertions of ritual uncleanness because of working in the secular world, are very significant because they point to certain doctrinal assumptions that of themselves are partial and ill developed.

3.4 Theme 3: The Parish

It is expected that every MSE will have had some experience in parish ministry, even if the primary ministry lies in other fields. It is unsurprising therefore that the archive is rich in commentary from MSEs on parish life and how they experience it. This is doubly important because the parish priest remains the normative role for ordained priesthood despite the continuing fall in the number of ordained clergy actually engaged in that ministry.

3.4.1 The MSE role in relation to the parish

> *I think I react instinctively as a Christian to people's needs and in my ordinary parish ministry, I see my role very much as a one to one role with people I meet in the parish who are often people who I have a second relationship with professionally and sometimes feel that they can speak to me more easily than they can to a stipendiary minister and in those relationships.* (Interview 10, 1983-4. p. 4)

[134] (Appiah 2005)
[135] (Greenwood 1988)

This was said by MS, a chartered surveyor, who is describing his role in a way that many MSEs would when looking at it from the perspective of the parish. Like a number of MSEs, MS had worshipped for many years in his parish and was known therefore as an ordained minister, a local business man and a former member of the congregation, all at the same time. This leads to questions about the efficacy of trying to separate out individual people's roles and identities, especially as the role is in the eye of the perceiver rather more than individuals who think they know what role they are playing at any point in time. Just like one MSE is surprised that a Roman Catholic mother wants his services because he is ordained rather than being a senior and experienced teacher, so MS is aware that while he might believe he is clear about the role he is playing and identities he is holding, this might not be the reason for a parishioner to talk to him. MS illustrates this when he says:

> *And every time I go to a church within say 15 mile radius of my house, I meet people I already know from my professional life and so I see my role increasingly as an interpreter of the church and my preaching really is being perhaps a person to whom people will certainly listen if they've become, if their ears had become dulled to their regular preachers. Here is someone they know from another world, they want to listen to him. I remember the other day I was preaching to my bank manager and it's that sort of thing that adds an extra dimension to life and you never know until you get into the church and get up in the pulpit and see who's in front of you.* (Interview 10, 1983-4 p. 17)

This observation comes up repeatedly in the archive. MSEs feel themselves to be heard differently from a parish priest precisely because they are known in other circumstances. This is therefore not a negative (i.e. a problem, or having to overcome some sort of contamination), but a situation in which the 'worker' role gives a different credence to that associated with a parish priest who is not a worker priest.

DE, a headmaster, identifies something of the change others have also observed:

> *I think again that the tradition of a parish priest perhaps is no longer the person to whom people automatically turn, if indeed he ever was. I don't know but I know certainly they don't do it now and I get a, so that's the priest and the doctor gone and I think it's the head teacher that cops a lot of this now.* (Interview 13, 1983-4 p. 14)

DE posits the old belief that it was the minister and the local doctor who were the resource for advice and guidance. However, that by the 1980s this had changed and that teachers were increasingly playing a part in that function. He includes several accounts of responding to marital separations, as examples of incidents that have come his way. BE, who works in consumer relations, picks up the same idea by referring to the 'un-churched':

> *… to have a committed, authorized if you like, Christian presence out there amongst people who are un-churched. The very presence there I find is valuable. It's valuable to me because I find I then take them back into the parish church on Sunday. I find it greatly, in for instance the queries, the doubts, the challenges that I get from the un-churched. This affects the way for instance I put my teaching service together. I can reflect in my sermons what are probably the problems of the people in the congregation.* (Interview 14, 1983-4 p. 14)

BE's observations draw a relational line between working with people who would not be likely to find themselves in church, and the life of the parish church and its Sunday sermon. Another teacher, DB, comments on being a teacher, MSE and priest:

> *That enabled me to bridge the gap between school and parish fairly easily.* (Interview 19, 1983-4 p.2)

The implication here is that the historic gap between the different institutions was bridged by many ordained ministers also being teachers. Templeman's study confirms that the gap continues as a modern phenomenon. Of the eight headmasters who responded to her questionnaire, seven responded to the question, 'What difference do you think ordination makes to your relations with local clergy?' The responses were:

a. *Useful for locum duties on Sundays!*
b. *Some benefits and especially when doing some teaching at the local theological college*
c. *Amicable – but they, some, wonder if I'm a fifth columnist, opting out of parish ministry*
d. *Local clergy tend to assume NSM clergy were ordained 'last week'. They have perception of MSE ministry as part-time and/or having got in 'by the back door – training deficient'*
e. *Local clergy do not understand; resentful of big salaries*
f. *Little connection with local clergy. Many in church hierarchy suspicious of independent schools.*

. (Templeman 2004 p.32)[136]

DB raises an issue that emerges at several different points in the archive, (see (*e)* above) of a degree of anxiety, if not outright resentment about the difference in income between a parish priest and an MSE:

> *… he is earning more money than the average parish clergyman is.* (Interview 19, 1983-4 p.3)

DB then continues at some length to explore the question of 'cash in hand' and to ask, whether after accounting for housing costs, the disposable income between the two priests is very different. The topic of income reflects difficult discussions that went on in many dioceses for some time about paying expenses to NSMs/MSEs because of the nature and source of their incomes. It is a differentiating factor that could loom large in parish life. DB closes by commenting on the difficulty of maintaining a spiritual life as an NSM, something that he acknowledges can be a problem in parish life, but which he sees to be more of an issue when being outside the regular patterns of morning and evening prayer.

3.4.2 Responses to MSEs by parishioners and parish priests

JD, a clock repairer, recounts another widely experienced phenomenon. In the interview, a customer who is delighted to find that JD is ordained, asks multiple questions about how the role works, finishing with a query about why he does not have his own parish (Interview 20, 1983-4 p. 2). JD also addresses a concern that many MSEs have. Because of his role in business he meets many people not associated directly with his parish. He describes how he always speaks to the individual's parish priests to let them know of his ministry with one of their parishioners. This is particularly interesting because geography situates an individual parishioner, but what has drawn them to JD is that he is accessible to them outside of the parish structure. The contradiction of breaking the geographic parameters of parish boundaries to meet a priest is emphasised by JD 'reporting back' as it were to a parish priest. Such accounts point not only to the normative nature of parishes in the Church of England, but to the expectations by priests –

[136] (Templeman 2004)

whether parochial or MSEs – that tying any work back to a parish is important. JD recounts how every parish priest that he contacted, thanked him for his work and asked him to continue it.

JW, a physicist and archaeologist, provides this insight:

> *I don't put a particular importance to my parish ministry. I don't really mean to, I don't wish to say that I don't believe in parish ministry, I do because I think it is the centre of the Church of England's Ministry at the moment, but there are other ministries. And I see myself as fulfilling another ministry, but to fulfil that other ministry I must be attached to a church so, being attached to the church then opens up in people who attend that church other possibilities, because they look at me and say, 'Look J…, you're in the world, you work, you have these problems, how do you feel about this, how do you feel about this, what do you think of that, I've got a problem, can I talk to you, you'll understand'. So in other words, the ministry at work has a role also outside the work as well as inside the work. It isn't just tied to the place where I particularly work.* (Interview 21, 1983-4 pp 12-13)

The response by parishioners to someone who is seen to be pastorally sensitive to particular issues because of work outside of the Church is a widely reported phenomenon. JW is exploring the tensions of being both a respected work colleague and a respected member of the parish community. He describes his position in the parish:

> *… being ordained has set me aside in a separate role, in a separate position even if you like a unique position in the eyes of colleagues with whom I work and also people within the parish. I've always been very well accepted in the parish as a priest.* (Interview 21, 1983-4 p. 25)

The awareness of being well regarded in both the work place and the parish is significant and reflective of the adaptability of church goers, even when the church itself offers little by way of guidance on how a particular role is to be received. JW makes it clear later in the interview that this is a personal journey based on his own experience of acceptance in the parish arising from ordination, the same factor that led to the regard as a priest in his work place.

3.5 Conclusion: A first summary of the apparent significance of the archive

The interviews illuminate the nature of being an MSE from three perspectives: the church, priesthood itself, and the parish. These three elements can be described as an ecclesiology and as a framework for understanding the church as a whole. The framework is not comprehensive, but opens some windows onto individuals' experiences of the church and the nature of the roles they both expect, but are also perceived to play. The church is often referred to as the mystical body of Christ. It is also an institutional body persists through change and with many expectations laid upon it. To understand the church in all its formulations and presentations is a gargantuan task. Examination of the role experiences of MSEs provides a lens to reflect on this most complex of bodies. There are parallels with the human body here. Superficially, one sees much in common in terms of shape, size, and indeed in types of variation, be that skin colour or hair styles when examining individuals. However, it is easy to find difference. This becomes apparent not just in attitudes or food preferences, but also in more significant issues such as blood groups or tissue types. The same applies to the church. As with the body, it is possible to examine one or two clinical features (e.g. temperature, pulse, respiration rate) and come to major conclusions about the health of the individual. So in the church. Examination of some key features reveals a great deal about the nature of the institution.

The MSE interviews used in this study identify some of the key 'clinical features' that reveal the nature of the commonalities and differences to be found within the one body. The first of these might be described as geographic, focusing on the significance of place or positioning. Many of the interviewees are sensitive to the difference in place and position between where they work and where they are recognised formally ('licensed'). Just as the human body adopts different positions and places to achieve ease and comfort, MSEs can be found to be seeking such places and positions to achieve comfort and ease in their roles; not to make the function any less challenging, but to enable a more effective integration. Key to

this study is the wish to examine and develop a deeper understanding of how place, both as a physical reality and as an identity, has been central to determining the nature of the church and therefore the roles individuals have been authorised to undertake in it. This is reflected in comments about being a priest in the workplace or in the world, as set against those priests who are clearly focused on the parish. It leads to discussions about taking the church into the world and bringing the world into the church. Behind such language is a loose conceptual framework about settings and functions. However, to grasp better what is being expressed, it needs to be explored in terms of current social geography and how patterns of life have changed from the 1950s and 60s onwards. A number of the interviewees identify how well accepted MSEs are in the workplace, while also observing the discomfort felt by themselves and some parochial colleagues about their presence and role (or lack of it) in the parish church setting. The descriptions by MSEs of how they are called upon to explain the positions adopted by the Church and listen to the criticisms of it are set alongside the insistence of their work colleagues that MSEs are ‘different’ and therefore not subject to the same criticisms falling on the church. The difference appears to be that while wearing clerical dress on Sundays, they are seen primarily by their work colleagues as being on the same side of the fence as they are. Position and placement is therefore critical.

A second ‘clinical feature’ apparent from the interviews concerns the voice. Just as the human voice is often an early indicator of physical aliment (as in laryngitis or even the common cold), or transition through a stage of maturation (the voice breaking) so the ‘voice’ of the interviewees indicates significant changes in the body of the church. These changes might be pathological or simply developmental. To determine the significance of the voice of the interviewees and the archive as a whole requires deconstruction, as well as contextualisation. The MSEs themselves point to their own role in interpretation in terms of what the church stands for, but also of the events in people’s own lives. MSEs are seen as counsellors, as indeed are many other professionals in society, but in particular by

providing an interpretative framework that can account for the spiritual significance of human experiences. The deconstruction needs to focus on the ideas being explored and in how they are expressed. It is clear, as the MSEs themselves reflect, that they are dealing with significant assumptions about role, purpose and practice, and that this includes doctrinal assumptions as much as theological processes and sociological determinants, all of which seem difficult to disentangle and understand in the historical context. The MSEs are clearly aware of their own status as a comparatively new development in the life of the church, yet rather like youths with a recently broken voice, they are unsure if they are speaking as a treble or a bass. It is only by unpicking the mesh of issues from both a church and a societal setting that the meanings begin to emerge.

A third ‘clinical feature’ is what the archive discloses about experience of the institution of the church. Here it is as if the eyes are being examined. Skilled clinicians learn much by simply looking at patients’ eyes as they take their history. They can reveal tiredness, stress and even liver conditions. So it is with examining the archive for MSEs’ experiences of relating to, and dealing with, the institution. MSE is a lived experience in which it is apparent that lifestyle and belief are actively united. Despite this personal commitment, it is clear from many of the interviewees that it is a major challenge to live with the institution’s response to their role, or in some instances, the lack of response. It raises significant issues of self-definition and organisational labelling that in many instances arise from a sense of isolation and for some, resulting in anger and confusion as their role is ‘exploited’ by the institution in which they work. The cognitive dissonance of being selected by the institution and then not correctly placed and positioned seems to lead to a number of MSE leaving the ranks. This is compounded by the often reported lack of welcome from some parish priests who for a range of reasons seem unwilling or unable to respond to the development of MSE in the ordained life of the institution. This generates a sense of not belonging for some MSEs and leads many to use metaphors about a ministry on the margins or having a role that bridges the church and world of work. Either way, it points to MSEs seeing

themselves as being different in some sense and being perceived to be different by others, both in the church and in the workplace. It is this difference that can illuminate the institution.

A final ‘clinical feature’ is the nature of the ecclesiology that the study of MSE seems to reveal. In the human body there is a process known as homeostasis, a mechanism by which the body is constantly achieving balance, irrespective of physical challenges, such as being exposed to extremes of temperature, undertaking severe exercise, and catastrophic events like heart attacks. MSEs are an example of how the church’s homeostatic processes take effect. The theoretical ecclesiology indicates that all ordained ministers have the same standing, but reading the stories of MSEs suggests that in reality they do not hold equal status with parish priests. The archive also points to the applied approach to theology that MSEs adopt, aware that they have nowhere to turn to for help. To fathom out what it is that they are undertaking in their roles, and their awareness that they have to fulfil their calling is associated with uncertainty. The archive also reveals how doctrine has not been explored sufficiently in how to place MSEs within the wider church life. It points to marked confusion in the polity of the church and therefore among those responsible for the life of the church. This confusion is not limited to MSEs. It underlines deeper questions asked about the role of the laity in the church. The laity is charged with taking the Word of God into the workplace. The relationship between the laity and the MSEs should therefore in theory be the difficult one. Yet, MSEs report nothing but welcome from the laity at their place of work, who delight that they take their experience of work life into public prayer and worship, and gladly accept that they give direct pastoral care. MSEs challenge the assumption that the church is a community in its own right and project a fuller picture of the church as part of the wider community in which the whole of the laity is contributing, and in many ways is in leading roles. In this context MSEs indicate that they are heard differently from their ordained parochial colleagues because of a more natural relationship between themselves and the laity, bringing with it the more particular pastoral insights. The church’s capacity to

absorb such a difference and work to utilise the gifts of MSEs points to a deeply embedded homeostasis, but not one that to date can resolve the challenge of this role.

These four ‘clinical features’ open up four lines of analysis. By considering (1) the issues of place, (2) what the narrative reveals when deconstructed, (3) how the MSE experience shines a light on the nature of the church as institution, and (4) the nature of the unsteady ecclesiology, it may be possible to identify how the lack of a clear ecclesiology is leading to confusion in the role and positioning of MSEs. The deduction from the archive is that the sense of difference that MSEs experience is not addressed by the decision-makers in the church. The reason for this perception links to the MSE experience of the potential of their role in the world of work and apparent failure of the church to maximise this. This is compounded by what is reported to be resistance to understanding the MSE role by some parish priests. MSEs express no sense of paranoia about this, but frustration and occasional anger. However, it does identify that the church’s homeostatic processes seem to accept innovations, even when arising from only one or two dioceses. However, the application across the church is not actively explored, even after many years, other than to examine how such roles can support the normative parish and its internalised sacramental life. In the next chapter therefore a closer look will be taken at the church as an institution.

Chapter 4

Issues of place and institution

> *While the media have become indeed globally interconnected, and programs and messages circulate in the global network, we are not living in a global village, but in customized cottages globally produced and locally distributed.* (Castells 1996 p. 370)[137]

4.1 Introduction: A view through the lens of Manuel Castells

Castells[138] is not the most obvious prismatic source when examining an issue ecclesiologically. His background as a self-proclaimed Marxist of Spanish antecedents, now based in the USA, suggests that his direct knowledge of the structures and processes of the Church of England is perhaps limited. However, his work as a sociologist and indeed as a social geographer has provided insights into how social change is impacting on patterns of living and ways in which organisations and institutions can operate. Even more importantly, his work helps to formulate questions to illuminate the archive and to help give meaning to the material there. Castells is a helpful interlocutor because his analysis covers the same period as the archive. He became interested in what was happening in technology from the late 1950s onwards and began to examine how that impacted on society. While his motivation remained the management of capital and the role of the workforce, including how it is rewarded and utilised, he explored in depth the interrelationship between social phenomena and cultural change. His interest was also in the positioning of power as a social factor in the process of change.

From the perspective of the rise and establishment of MSE ministry in the Church of England, the questions of how this occurred and why have been answered to a satisfactory degree by Patrick Vaughan.[139] What is lacking is a consideration of the implications of this development in the organisation of the Church of England and also in terms of how the role was to be developed. The brief history given in

[137] (Castells 1996)
[138] (Castells 1989;Castells 1996)
[139] (Vaughan 1990)

Chapter 1 indicated the trajectory that had occurred, leading to what appears to be an irreversible shift to non-stipendiary ministry as the majority component of the ordained 'workforce'. This term suggests altogether too much of planning and performance, but it has to be acknowledged that the normative view about ordained priests in the Church of England is that they will be in a parish. Despite the dramatic nature of this change, and in the midst of it, dioceses are still concerned that NSMs/MSEs should be accounted for in terms of parish work, especially in terms of availability to take Sunday services. The implication is that the leadership of the church remains fixated on the availability of 'Mass priests' (i.e. those that can lead Holy Communions) rather than exploring the development of MSE in terms of how the church can take on new shapes. Perhaps there is even some anxiety about examining this development as a new inspiration by the Holy Spirit, i.e. taking a theological approach that reflects ecclesiologically on the life of the church. Morgan's study into NSMs in the Church of England confirms this central focus on the provision of church-based services.[140]

Morgan's study reveals a church still focused on place (church building) and time (when the services are to be undertaken) in very particular ways. Why this fixation exists is a challenging question to address when historians like Marwick,[141] Donnelly,[142] Sandbrook[143] and Sounes[144] have all pointed to the way in which society became increasingly detached from fixed places and fixed time from the 1960s onwards as work sites became more remote from home, and work schedules became ever more flexible. It is interesting to reflect on a church structure that hinges on home when throughout that period people have progressively spent less time in their homes and more time at work or in places where they could pursue other interests. It is possible to conclude that the church is keen to cater to the needs of people marginalised by society and therefore

[140] (Morgan 2013)
[141] (Marwick 1998)
[142] (Donnelly 2005)
[143] (Sandbrook 2006)
[144] (Sounes 2006)

outside of the mainstream; or that localism is of sufficient strength that clergy must be provided on the traditional basis; or perhaps even that other alternatives for the provision of church life cannot be conceived. Whatever the reasons that could be speculated about, it is important to note the tension between how society has changed on these two components of place and time alone and the difficulty that the Church has had in responding to these changes. Despite the modelling of different ways of employing MSEs, these ways seem not yet perceived to be of sufficient significance to be studied in order to illuminate theologically and ecclesiologically what they mean for the possible future shaping of the church.

The shortage of ordained ministers is often projected as a crisis in the life of the church. Castells takes a view on the nature of crisis:

> *Crises determine social conflicts and political debates, resulting, sometimes, in restructuring processes, which, on the basis of political coalitions and political strategies, modify the rules of the social system while preserving its fundamental logic. Restructuring does not necessarily come about; other outcomes of crises are revolution, or a long period of 'muddling through' social inertia.* (Castells 1989 p. 3)[145]

It may be that the shortage of clergy has not been sufficient to generate enough of a sense of crisis to lead to major restructuring, or indeed to revolution. However, there seems to be plenty of evidence of muddling through. Lindblom[146,147] is credited with being the originator of the notion of undertaking policy development as a process of management decision-making. This taps into the notion of the church as a body that operates homeostatically, i.e. making fine adjustments to try and keep things going rather than choosing to go for large scale and rapid change. Indeed if the culture is one of small steps or muddling through, then major changes like the development of NSM and in particular MSEs are not significant. This development can then be perceived as accidental, having progressed with almost invisible small steps as the body of the church as a whole has adapted to its presence and absorbed it, rather than debating it. This means that it is only

[145] (Castells 1989)
[146] (Lindblom 1959)
[147] (Lindblom 1979)

over a long period of time, when retrospective reflection is possible, that the significance of the change can be determined. The process started in England as an experiment and in policy terms remains so. The key is that the incremental steps have now led to a structural shift in the balance of roles undertaken by ordained ministers. This has occurred in parallel with remarkable, even unprecedented, social change. Society in England has moved from being based in local places where the working life was Monday to Friday, nine-to-five, with half days off for shop-keepers during the week and most of all, no shop opening on Sundays. The highly mobile, 24-hour society underpinned by social media and the internet has changed this scenario. To examine this more closely from the perspective of the MSE archive, and using Castells questions and insights, it is valuable to reflect in more detail on notions of place, experience of living and what the shape of the new society is as the IT revolution displaced the thinking and ways of life that existed during the previous industrial revolution.

4.2 Notions of place: Geography, home, and self-definition

From the ecclesiological perspective, the notions of place are significant in understanding the shape and roles that the church has traditionally had. These notions are a combination of civil requirements, ecclesiastical developments, and specific missionary initiatives. The parish was a collection of homes and therefore of people, as well as being either a component of feudal control or unit of taxation. Pounds provides a history of these changes.[148] Parishes were also the definers of community and givers of identity as individuals played their part in the recognised social framework. What started out, however, as combined ecclesial and civil boundaried areas, have in due course become distinct phenomena with the civil parish being electorally and socially separate from the church parish. Castells[149,150] leads into a deeper analysis of this as parishes were the basis of the town and city life that has emerged during the twentieth century in England, calling into question the evidence for relationships between time and place.

[148] (Pounds 2000)
[149] (Castells 1989)
[150] (Castells 1996)

4.2.1 Parish as geography and institution

Pounds described in detail the emergence of the English parish. He wrote that:

> *Parish bounds were to the small, closely knit communities of pre-industrial England almost as important as international boundaries today. They not only separated distinct groups of people but also drew a line between their respective economic resources and social obligations.* (Pounds 2000 p. 76)[151]

Such parish boundaries gave security in numerous ways. They offered protection from potential marauders, ensured some degree of local welfare as neighbours felt obliged to care for each other with the health of the community resting on the health of all, and perhaps most significantly, they gave identity. Knowing where one came from and what one's role was in that community provided assurance of purpose and rationale for existence. The local church played a large part in that. While attendance at services may not have been as total as myth suggests, the church provided the significant gateway services for births, marriages and deaths. It also helped to mark the seasons through its liturgical calendar and provided at least one person in each community who had some degree of literary skill, with sufficient ability to read the services and write basic documents. Conversely, the people of the parish were usually taxed for the upkeep of the church, commonly referred to as the tithe. Pounds pointed out that this gave a territorial obligation to both parties (p.37).[152] This combination of identity giving through localisation and fiduciary commitment provided a framework for individual and institutional co-existence for nearly 800 years in recognisably similar, if slightly different forms.

As the parish system broke down in the 19th century with the spreading of the industrial revolution, the challenges to individuals in terms of identity and to the church in terms of institution became quite marked. Trollope's series of novels *Chronicles of Barsetshire* (also known as the 'Barchester Chronicles'),[153] describes this in various ways. Published between 1855 and 1867, they illuminate how the church and individuals, through the format of the novel, respond to the

[151] (Pounds 2000)
[152] (Pounds 2000)
[153] (Trollope 2013)

challenges of social change. New churches and parishes were created and a form of priestly ministry that was focused on poor, exploited and disadvantaged people became more dominant. In this period, identity became awarded less by place and more by work undertaken. The following century saw continued social change and dramatic history as two world wars reshaped both processes of individual identity and institutions like the church. Castells' argument is that, stimulated by the demands of the 1939-45 war, countries, in particular the United States, began to invest in technology where no direct return on capital investment was sought. The objective was at first national security and then national supremacy (p.5). However, as the technological developments of the US military began to interface with the 'flower power' movement of the mid-1960s Castells saw something very significant happening:

> *... in spite of the decisive role of military funding and markets in fostering early stages of the electronics industry during the 1940s-1960s, the technological blossoming that took place in the early 1970s can be somehow related to the culture of freedom, individual innovation, and entrepreneurialism that grew out of the 1960s culture of American campuses. ... The emphasis on personalized devices, on interactivity, on networking and the relentless pursuit of new technological breakthroughs, even when it apparently did not make much business sense, was clearly a discontinuity with the somewhat cautious tradition of the corporate world. The information technology revolution half-consciously diffused through the material culture of our societies the libertarian spirit that flourished in the 1960s movements.* (Castells 1996 pp 5-6)[154]

In acknowledging the military drivers for the technological change, Castells also points out that the significant developments moved outside the military community at the same time as individualism was beginning to be given new shape by the 'flower power' events on the US west coast from the mid-1960s onwards. The demand for personal devices that facilitated individual networks was supported by a demand for developments in such devices that both improved the connectivity, but also 'looked good'. Technology and fashion combined as a reflection of how a generation with increased personal resources wanted to be seen to be expressing themselves. The technology and the fashion style developments combined to

[154] (Castells 1996)

provide opportunities of individuation not available previously. In reflecting on this from the perspective of the notions of parish as geography and institution, it is clear that the *status quo ante* was profoundly challenged. The need for a fixed place of abode to provide identity was shattered, as was the need for work and home to be closely associated, and for conformity of appearance and behaviour because of lack of choice. In North America and the UK the paradigm for behaviours and life-style were comparatively quickly re-shaped and the notion of parish as both geography and institution providing services relating to local life rapidly came to be seen to be arcane. Scholars like Bruce,[155,156,157,158] Brown,[159,160] Davie,[161,162,,163] and McLeod[164] were to devote much of their academic careers to exploring the significance of this for the institution. What Castells[165] did was to draw attention to the need for an analysis that starts from the technology and the geography rather than from within the institution of the church itself.

4.2.2 Home and work, community and leisure

Castells opens his seminal work, *The Informational City*, with the following observation:

> *A technological revolution of historic proportions is transforming the fundamental dimensions of human life: time and space.* (Castells 1989 p.1)[166]

If this sounded grandiose in 1989, there has been a significant period of time to demonstrate the truth of that assertion. He goes on:

[155] (Bruce 2002)
[156] (Bruce 2003)
[157] (Bruce 2010)
[158] (Bruce 2011)
[159] (Brown 2001)
[160] (Brown and Snape 2010)
[161] (Davie 1994)
[162] (Davie 2002)
[163] (Davie et al. 2003)
[164] (McLeod 2007)
[165] (Castells 1996)
[166] (Castells 1989)

> *Our hypothesis is that this context is characterized simultaneously by the emergence of a new mode of socio-technical organization (which we call the informational mode of development) and by the restructuring of capitalism, as the fundamental matrix of institutional and economic organization in our societies.* (Castells 1989 p. 2)

Castells was clear that the new relationship between society and technology and the new capitalism, which was to lead to the economic collapse of 2008, was of prime significance when attempting to evaluate change at either the individual or institutional level. He argued that this logic also explains the pattern of changes that is seen in cities and other forms of regional existence. During this period, patterns of employment were modified, social expectations both for communities and individuals changed as personal resources expanded, and concerns about the quality of life became mainstream media issues. Central to this have been individual communication devices in the form of telephones or computers and iPads. Individuals have acquired unparalleled access to information, leisure activities, the capacity to organise time and the facility to choose the moment when they will or will not engage with others. Within two centuries, many western societies, including England, have gone from unavoidable social contact and very constrained life-styles determined by lack of resources, to almost total control over environment and activity. John Lees, an MSE concerned with careers and work, wrote about this in 2012.[167] He observed how work patterns have changed from ’35 to 40 hours a week’ over to a ‘24/7 economy’, in which the earlier controls on the time to be committed to work have evaporated. He examined how the language of work has changed with a shift from the use of the word ‘vocation’ to ‘occupation’ or ‘job’ to describe an individuals’ activity. He observed that even when not working, a great deal of time is spent preparing to work or reflecting on the management of work. He drew attention to the understanding of vocation as duty, relating to gifts that individuals had where the focus was not consumers, but people requiring a service, even if that was a commercial one. Castells[168] description of the new relationship between society, technology and capitalism,

[167] (Lees 2012)
[168] (Castells 1989)

and way of life has become a reality for many in the societies of the developed world.

The implications of this for the perception of self and sense of self are profound and largely undetermined as yet. Just as the technology that underpins these changes is determined by digital numbering (patterns of one and zero), many aspects of lives are determined by numeric assessments. In terms of self-perception this is significant in several ways. Any numeric assessment is a snapshot in time and does not give a full picture. Identity can therefore become associated with incidents and moments that prevent the whole individual being appraised. Also, identity can become associated with very particular events, again excluding the fuller framework of behaviours. This atomising of behaviours results in greater flexibility in terms of activity, but also creates problems in assessing self and being assessed by others. Gone are the days of being Mr X from Y; that is no longer a sufficient identity. As an institution, the church struggles with this degree of fracturing because it is structured to focus on more permanent notions of community. This is partly justified because as Castells points out, this fracturing increases the seemingly contradictory experience of individualism and the formation of tighter communities:

> *Faced with the variable geometry of the space of flows, grassroots mobilizations tend to be defensive, protective, territorially bounded, or so culturally specific that their codes of self-recognizing identity become non-communicable, with societies tending to fragment themselves into tribes, easily prone to a fundamentalist affirmation of their identity. While power constitutes an articulated functional space of flows, societies deconstruct their historical culture into localized identities that recover the meaning of places only at the price of breaking down communication between different cultures and different places.* (Castells 1989 p. 350)[169]

Castells is illuminating that a key message from the group of Ministers in Secular Employment most deeply embedded in this change, is that territoriality is no longer the major determinant of the way that life is lived. The consequence of this is spelt

[169] (Castells 1989)

out: the dangers are fundamentalism and the breakdown of communication so as to maintain a traditional or historic identity.

4.2.3. Secular definition of place

Drawing on Castells' analysis, it should be asked what might be a current definition of place that does not need locators like parishes to confirm it. Castells refers to a 'new socio-spatial form' (p.172).[170] He explored what the impact of the new technologies has been. His main observation gives information as one of three major differentials that change the definitions of self and space. His concept of the 'space of flows' is an attempt to explain how the exchange and use of information has taken up a space of identification previously occupied by notions of geography. In this new technological world, individuals become identified by what they transmit or accept. Central to this is the lack of need for agreement on timings or proximity. The radicalness of this development can be difficult to comprehend, especially if coming from a generation that has grown up with the technology. For people not familiar with this change, it can seem alienating and mystifying that an email, or Skype discussion are now at least as valuable as a visit or chat on the telephone. It can seem depersonalised. In contrast, people raised in this culture see it as enabling them and their life style.

Castells' comment that 'codes of self-recognizing identity become non-communicable' (Castells 1989 p.350)[171] rings true for many MSEs. It echoes Appiah's[172] challenge about identity being a tension between self-perception and the codes of recognition used by others. It is a tension that needs to be recognised and addressed if a resolution of the problem of the church's separation from this process is to be found. If the definition of place rests on an historic sense and particular activities in church terms, then problems of communication arise. Virilio described the secular change in this manner:

[170] (Castells 1989)
[171] (Castells 1989)
[172] (Appiah 2005)

> *With the interfacing of computer terminals and video monitors, distinctions of here and there no longer mean anything. ... There is no plenum; space is not filled with matter. Instead an unbounded expanse appears in the false perspective of the machines' luminous emissions. From here on, constructed space occurs within an electronic typology where the framing of perspective and the gridwork weft of numerical images renovate the division of urban property. The ancient private/public occultation and the distinction between housing and traffic are replaced by an over exposure in which the difference between 'near' and 'far' simply ceases to exist, ...* (Virilio 2002 p. 442)[173]

Like Castells, Virilio sees the impact of technology as being central to the definition of self, attributed to both person and place. The old terms like ‘town’ no longer refer to a specifically distinct place as they spread and incorporate surrounding villages and other towns, leading to the development of conurbations and in some instances of megacities. This is compounded by technology that does not need a geographic locator in order to function, rendering its users in a real sense placeless, as the only place that matters becomes the access point to a terminal, a keyboard, or a touch screen. In this context, the electronic identifier has become the secular sense of place, not a personal relationship or postal address. Virilio also points to the significance of numbers as part of this process (p. 442).[174] While this is part of the science of the technology being used, it effectively removes the significance of a name. This revolution has thus changed three fundamentals of historic relationship building, i.e. place, name and time.

Perhaps most significantly, this revolution has redefined what might be understood as community. Individuals can live a comparatively physically isolated life, relating only to a limited number of people in terms of actually sharing their presence in time and place. However, in terms of electronic community, this can be virtually (in both senses) global. In the current social scenario, not only is it possible to be in touch with and relate to numbers of people inconceivable in an earlier age, but the speed of the interactions and the totality of the knowledge about those individuals being interacted with can be of a level and degree unimaginable in times past.

[173] (Virilio 2002)
[174] (Virilio 2002)

Margaret Joachim, an MSE who has held several corporate roles, writes about the days just before her ordination as an MSE:

> *At the last training weekend before ordination, we were given some serious advice by one of the course staff. He drew several separate circles on the board, and labelled them 'Church', 'Home', 'Leisure', 'Friends', 'Voluntary Activities', and so on. Then he told us two things:*
>
> - *These activities must not be too far apart (literally), or we will waste too much time travelling between them*
> - *You cannot reasonably engage in more than three – or at most four – of all these things, or you will be under too much strain, you'll be split between too many commitments and you won't be able to do any of them properly.* (Joachim 2010 p. 9)[175]

Joachim went on to explore what this means for getting to know people and the power of context in how that knowledge is generated. She described her work and church context and sees the challenge as being one of integration. Here one hears echoes of Vaughan's[176] concerns about cognitive dissonance as the different pulls become too great. This approach reflects how the church saw its own role and function and how priests would operate in that framework. It reveals a mind-set still uncontaminated by the IT revolution breaking about it. It also reveals an institution not reading the future and still embedded in its own self-perceptions and not preparing those who would be ministers for two, three of four decades ahead with the insights and guidance that would equip them for the new world then emerging. To use a physical metaphor, the church was studying the path to work out where to place its feet, rather than watching the horizon so as to judge the direction.

4.3 Experience of living

To understand the impact of the technological changes for the church it is worth examining briefly the impact it has had on the patterns of living of the population. This has already been alluded to in this chapter, but three things in particular need to be addressed: the development of network living, IT and the redefining of the nature of personal time, and individualism and the new senses of community.

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[175] (Joachim 2010)
[176] (Vaughan 1998)

Together, these three factors highlight the gap between different sorts of ministers and ministries in the Church of England.

4.3.1 Network living

> *Yet recent historical experience has already provided some of the answers concerning the new organizational form of the informational economy. Under different organizational arrangements, and through diverse cultural expressions, they are all based on networks. Networks are the fundamental stuff of which new organizations are and will be made.* (emphasis in original) (Castells 1996 p. 180)[177]

One argument would be that networks have always existed; that our knowledge of things and people grew out of multiple encounters and that slowly, over a life time, an ever wider network of people known to an individual is created. For most of known history however, for most people, this has been a kindred-based system with people shaped (networked) by family, clan or tribe. Legitimation and authorisation for contacts came through relations either by introducing people or vouching for them (character references are the modern descendants of this). Significantly, church and parish had a key part to play as they were both the legitimation for contact and often the avenue through which non-family linkages could legitimately be made, notably through marriage ceremonies. The impact of the industrial revolution was felt in many ways, not least in creating social mobility, which broke the historic geographic and family links. The need for social networks rather than family became important as the family framework was lost. It also became important for employment and the development of business. The communication frameworks underpinning this included word of mouth, letters, and the increasing use of the 'reference' to seek information about someone. This changed radically with the Second World War. The technologies that evolved during that protracted conflict enabled a different type of communication to develop. The verb 'to network' was first used in the First World War to describe the operation of a series of linked radios.[178] However, usage of 'to network' referring to linking individuals, computers or organisations was a later twentieth century

[177] (Castells 1996)
[178] (Little et al. 1973)

phenomenon. The combination of social change and the development of technology produced a different way of relating to others in terms of employment, but also in the wider social sphere. Castells summarised the change thus:

> *... circa 1920-70 and circa 1970-90. The major analytical distinction between the two periods stems from the fact that during the first period the societies under consideration became post-agricultural, while in the second period they became post-industrial.* (Castells 1996 p. 224)[179]

He noted that the change to a post-agricultural society had been completed in the UK by 1921, with only 7.1% of the workforce being engaged in agriculture (Castells 1996 p. 225). The development of the workforce in this era was key to the growth and application of these new information transmission based technologies. The use of these technologies changed the ways in which people worked and related. The new ways of working using these technologies generated a degree of connectedness not previously experienced. Not only was the utilisation of the technologies near global, it was increasingly universal as the spread of electronic telephones incorporated even people with the lowest incomes. Added to this was a remarkable degree of selectivity: while so many things were accessible, through choice, individuals could limit access to themselves by limiting access to their personal contact details. This gave a mix of public access and private accessibility not experienced in previous generations. Networking as a way of working and experiencing social life therefore provided previously inaccessible levels of privacy along with freedom of choice. Virtual independence in both senses was available.

This new world has also crept up on the Church of England. John Pritchard, Bishop of Oxford, wrote in 2009 that:

> *MSEs know about networks. They know the world in which most secular folk live today. … MSEs know that people live in different rhythms, shapes and networks from those that parish-based ministry might like or assume.* (Pritchard 2009 pp. 17-18)[180]

[179] (Castells 1996)
[180] (Pritchard 2009)

For a bishop in one of the largest dioceses of the Church of England to make these comments is deeply significant. It confirms that priests devoted to parish ministry are likely to have failed to realise the importance of how networking has become a key element of secular life. Also, MSEs represent a particular resource by being fluent in this new type of existence. The nature of networking, living with its key features of speed of access, availability, openness, capacity and universality, all challenge a system based on geography and internal recognition processes. While people complain about having to learn new ways of operating new IT systems, each new innovation seems to be quickly adopted as a new social trend, adding to the challenge to the church structures and ways of working that can appear quite literally parochial (in both senses) as the methods of communication continue to evolve into ever more sophisticated systems of interpersonal communication. Network living is light on its feet, associated with rapid change and access to opinions and experiences that reflect a more liminal form of existence than is reflected in the permanence that the church is perceived to be projecting. As networks develop, they become ever more important to the way of life individuals choose to adopt and the perceptions of self. Such developments may account for the comparative popularity of church networks (lay religious orders for instance), which seem to be growing significantly, and for ways of influencing changes that certain groups wish to lobby for (e.g. Inclusive Church). These developments remain marginal to the church overall, but demonstrate that increasing numbers within the institution are seeking to build on the strengths that such developments represent within the life of the church.

4.3.2 IT and the redefining of time

Discussion of IT always seems a modern thing to do. It obscures the fact that the development of IT is a process that is more than 150 years old and is reflective of a mechanism of continuous change rather than one-off events. It incorporates many different tools and technologies that are embedded in society in different ways. Castells summarises the phenomenon in this way:

> *... the dilemma of technological determinism is probably a false problem, since technology is society, and society cannot be understood or represented without its technological tools.* (Castells 1996 p. 5)[181]

This reminds Castells' readers sharply that society cannot be separated from its technologies. What is central to the understanding of the information technologies is how they have bridged location, generation and, most significantly, time. Castells goes on:

> *Differential timing in access to the power of technology for people, countries, and regions is a critical source of inequality in our society. The switched-off areas are culturally and spatially discontinuous…* (Castells 1996 p. 33)[182]

Two key points emerge here: technology is embedded in society to a degree that it becomes impossible to distinguish one (society) from another (technology); and those parts of a community not integrated into the technology become separated both culturally and spatially (a term that implies in both time and space) from that society. Information Technology in this context is essentially a way of managing symbols through which communication between people and places can be achieved. In trying to explain how the notion of spatiality has changed, Castells suggests:

> *Thus, I propose the idea that there is a new spatial form characteristic of social practices that dominate and shape the network society: the space of flows. The space of flows is the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows. By flows I understand purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors in the economic, political, and symbolic structures of society.* (Castells 1996 p. 442)[183]

Castells described a process of time sharing achieved through 'disjointed positions', which underlines the new phenomenon where communication does not require the presence of individuals in place or time. No longer is it required that the persons communicating can see each other or be able to share at least the same point in time as when having a conversation via a telephone. No longer is it necessary to share a date and an hour in order to communicate; the technology

[181] (Castells 1996)
[182] (Castells 1996)
[183] (Castells 1996)

creates mechanisms for communications to be launched and received at the will of the sender and the receiver. No liaison to agree a time of sending and reception between the two is required in order to achieve the communication. This leads to the phenomenon where:

> *The network enterprise learns to live within this virtual culture. Any attempt at crystallizing the position of the network as a cultural code in a particular time and space sentences the network to obsolescence, since it becomes too rigid for the variable geometry required by informationalism.* (Castells 1996 p. 215)[184]

Informationalism, according to Castells, is the dominant motif of the network. The network only exists to generate, exchange, and then delete (or occasionally archive) information. This becomes the dominant determinant of social practices varying from employment to personal relationships to religious belief. In doing so it generates what Castells calls 'timeless time', in what turns out to be almost theological terms:

> *I propose the idea that timeless time, as I label the dominant temporality of our society, occurs when the characteristics of a given context, namely, the informational paradigm and the network society, induce systematic perturbation in the sequential order of phenomena performed in that context. This perturbation may take the form of compressing the occurrence of phenomena, aiming at instantaneity, or else by introducing random discontinuity in the sequence. Elimination of sequencing creates undifferentiated time, which is tantamount to eternity.* (emphasis in original) (Castells 1996 p. 494)[185]

Castells' main interest is the 'perturbation', that is, the phenomenon that so compresses time and space that virtual instantaneity is achieved. There are clear parallels in the thinking with the compression of time and space as proposed in quantum physics. The notion of eternity proposed therefore is not a timelessness of forever, but one in which the current instant is the whole of time – past, present and future – and no other instant of time occurs until another perturbation arises. It is the perturbation that creates the instant of time, not time that as a continuum provides the spatiality for the action. Castells takes this notion further when he writes:

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[184] (Castells 1996)
[185] (Castells 1996)

> *Timeless time belongs to the space of flows, while time discipline, biological time, and socially determined sequencing characterizes places around the world, materially structuring and destructuring our segmented societies. Space shapes time in our society, thus reversing an historical trend: flows induce timeless time, places are time-bounded.* (emphasis in original) (Castells 1996 p. 495)[186]

He makes the point that it is space that gives context to time now, as it is through geographic location that such time constraints can be exercised. He goes on to illuminate the conclusion to this argument, that:

> *The space of flows ... dissolves time by disordering the sequence of events and making them simultaneous, thus installing society in eternal ephemerality. ... Selected functions and individuals transcend time, while downgraded activities and subordinate people endure life as time goes by. While the emerging logic of the new social structure aims at the relentless supersession of time as an ordered sequence of events, most of society, in a globally interdependent system, remains on the edge of the new universe.* (Castells 1996 p. 497)[187]

Castells is clear about the consequence of this. Two groups emerge: those operating in the space of flows whose lives are perceived to be typical of the elite and include among their number the wealthy, the powerful and the intellectually most able, as well as a generation of younger people who use the new IT not because it is new, but because in their life-times it has always been there. This is in contrast to the people who find themselves to be not so much excluded, as, for whatever reason, have not included themselves. He acknowledges that this is not a placid experience in most instances and the excluded people experience the resistance of those who work in this 'timeless' mode.

This new form of time is therefore of critical importance when considering the nature of the church, and especially when MSEs, as Pritchard[188] wrote previously, are those among ordained ministers most competent in this new world of networks and boundlessness in terms of time, if not space. The challenge therefore becomes clearer as this rather detailed description of Castells'[189] thinking is laid

[186] (Castells 1996)
[187] (Castells 1996)
[188] (Pritchard 2009)
[189] (Castells 1996)

out, that an institution that defines itself around geographic points runs the danger of excluding itself. This becomes even more of an issue when considering the people who see themselves belonging to the church. It is therefore valuable to examine this notion of the individual further.

4.3.3 Individualism and the new community

In considering the new way of living, where networks are the *modus operandi* and time is defined by the technology used, the nature of the person caught up in this framework becomes a concern. Castells questioned the management of the symbols of communication and the way in which the structure of the information systems controls the activities associated with the lives of citizens (pp 18-19).[190] He saw one of the organisational characteristics of informationalism as:

> *.. the shift from centralized large corporations to decentralized networks made up of a plurality of sizes and forms of organizational units.* (emphasis in original) (Castells 1996 p. 32)[191]

In the work context, the size and shape of the employing organisation has shrunk and in some respects shattered into much smaller and more diverse components, even if it is still within one organisational structure. This has been caused and achieved by the use of informationalism, according to Castells,[192] where the creation and processing of information is the underpinning framework. It is important to emphasise therefore that the relational crux is not one person to another, but engagement with the technology. The shift is from personal engagement, often impossible to avoid in earlier social structures, to relationships mediated by the technology involved in conducting it. It is worth noting that in both models the amount of control exercised by individuals in the creation and management of the relationship is not principally self-willed, but is the elicited response from the stimuli of the situation. This mirrors how the body operates physiologically with organs, or the whole body responding to stimuli; the individual is usually incapable of stopping the response because of its autonomic or reflexive

[190] (Castells 1989)
[191] (Castells 1996)
[192] (Castells 1996)

nature. However, the received belief is captured by the adage ‘we choose our friends but our families are given to us’. To appreciate fully what Castells[193] is writing about, it is important to reflect on what it means to be individual. What is significant is that the technology, with its ability to compartmentalise and segment unlike previously, opens the way to far greater control over one’s own relationships and environment. The level of choice is now so much greater, even down to selectivity about genetics and gender, something Castells[194] also associates with the informational revolution.

Castells is conscious of the implications of this for social existence. He explored how informationalism impacts society and individuals:

> *The new social and economic organization based on information technologies aims at centralizing management, individualizing work, and customizing markets, thereby segmenting markets and fragmenting societies.* (Castells 1996 p. 282)[195]

While describing how the new technology can bring into contact individuals and societies that previously had no contact, Castells observed how its impact is focused on the fragmenting of existing societies, and more importantly, individualising existence. He explained the consequences of this more fully:

> *Thus, people do still live in places. But because functions and power in our society are organized in the space of flows, the structural domination of its logic essentially alters the meaning and dynamic of places. Experience, by being related to places, becomes abstracted from power, and meaning is increasingly separated from knowledge. There follows a structural schizophrenia, between two spatial logics that threatens to break down communication channels in society. The dominant tendency is toward a horizon of networked, ahistorical space of flows, aiming at imposing its logic over scattered, segmented places, increasingly unrelated to each other, less and less able to share cultural codes. Unless cultural, political, and physical bridges are deliberately built between these two forms of space, we may be heading toward life in parallel universes whose times cannot meet because they are warped into different dimensions of a social hyperspace.* (Castells 1996 pp 458-9)[196]

[193] (Castells 1996)
[194] (Castells 1996)
[195] (Castells 1996)
[196] (Castells 1996)

Castells is describing two social phenomena: one in which relationships do not require any sense of place because the real place they inhabit is the network, and in contrast, people outside of this network become separated from what is in effect the structurally dominant process and therefore presence. Central to this argument is the lack of sharing of the cultural codes that link individuals into a group with historic and kinship linkages. Castells is concerned also with what this reveals about the nature of power in this new networked world based on informationalism, which will be addressed later. The degree of individual separation that can be chosen – even down to the emergence of 'gated' communities where a person dwells in an apartment, descends by lift to the car, drives to work, place of leisure etc. and uses another lift into another environment – typifies this new existence. The personal choice about who one contacts, perhaps even not needing to 'go' somewhere to work other than one's own computer at home, all points to a mode of existence in which personal choice becomes paramount and is projected as what is to be aspired to. In this context the individualism is not the 'differentness' aspired to in terms of fashion, but actually a life-style choice about control over more aspects of one's life than it has been possible to achieve in the past.

4.4 The new society

As Pritchard [197] indicated, there is awareness of a gap in understanding of how society is changing within the church as well as outside it. He also indicated that MSEs were in a particularly good position to bridge that gap. What he did not address is any strategic response from the church to become part of the change. MSEs are very aware of both the societal changes and the church's position.

4.4.1 MSEs experience of work

Drawing once more on the archive, writing in 1979, Syms expressed what can be described as an extreme perspective. He had spent ten years in parish ministry before going to work as an actor:

[197] (Pritchard 2009)

> *I have come to believe that the regular church member is unknowingly one of the sickest people in our society, and clergy are the saddest professionals. They are people who cannot relate to each other without manufacturing the means of relating.* (Syms 1979 p. 34)[198]

He goes on:

> *The clergy are not overworked. But they do have an obsession with work, make a virtue out of working all the hours God made, and the vast majority of the 'work' is of no interest to God, or anyone else except themselves and involved lay people they have cajoled into dependence.* (Syms 1979 p. 36)[199]

While extreme, these views are also met with from time-to-time in the archive. They reflect not only disillusionment with the role of the priest in the parish, but also with the nature of the relationship between priest and congregation. The remarks speak to an underlying problem about role and structure. Twenty years after Castells wrote, Syms offered a more nuanced, but still pertinent view in the light of the development of chaplaincy services in everything from prisons and hospitals to schools and the armed services:

> *A sector ministry was an attempt to relate the churches to a sector of the world's life, not the life of the churches. It was always hard to explain that the parish priest was himself a sector minister in that he ministered to one sector of human life, the residential.* (Syms 1998 p. 312)[200]

Perhaps by this time, Syms' thinking was influenced by informationalism, but he now saw the challenge of connecting the church to the world of work, and perceived the parish priest as one someone who related particularly well to the residential sector. It is important to note that work, however defined, had been seen as a mission field and something entered in order to 'recruit' people to the Christian life. It was not that work was not a worthy activity, but that in some sense work was simply a vehicle for accessing these individuals. Wickham[201] and Ross[202] wrote about industrial mission as an expression of church in the workplace. Indeed Wickham, when reflecting on the later on MSEs, made two very

[198] (Syms 1979)
[199] (Syms 1979)
[200] (Syms 1998)
[201] (Wickham 1957)
[202] (Ross 1997)

significant observations.[203] He agreed with Mantle that few MSEs are employed in work, by which both authors meant manual work (p. 208),[204] and therefore that most of these priests are actually parish auxiliaries. He also believed that:

> *"... we may say that the concept of 'priests in secular employment' can make sense but only within the larger framework of a church renewed and structured for mission, as part of a missionary movement. Without that they are likely to be, at best tokens of frustration."* (Wickham 1998 p. 213)[205]

In this context, MSEs must see their role as essentially missionary, going out from the church to bring someone back in order to address the on-going concerns about numbers attending church services.

MSEs themselves were commenting in a rather different way. John Hawkins, an architect and subsequent MSE, published in the year of his death (2006) a private memoir of the journey in his work life and into ordained ministry. He observed:

> *A vicar colleague on the local deanery chapter once complained that his MSE curate seemed to show little enthusiasm for helping him in the parish. What is her weekday job, I asked, and he replied that he was not entirely sure, something clerical he thought. It happened that the lady had a fulltime post working with blind people. To my mind, such work can be of more significance in furthering God's Kingdom than if she were to appear in the pulpit every week.* (Hawkins 2006 p. MC6/4)[206]

Hawkins demonstrated several key elements in this extract: first, the importance of work in its own right as something that furthers the Kingdom of God; second that as many other MSEs have recorded, parish priests feel free to criticise the individual without having fully grasped what work they engage in and working with them theologically to understand the calling; thirdly, that the criterion for criticism is lack of support to the parish. Trish Thompson,[207] in her contribution to *An Ordinary Way of Life* in Francis 1998,[208] talked about 'permeable boundaries' as the way in which being a priest in the workplace opens up the ministry of the church to people

[203] (Wickham 1998)
[204] (Mantle 2000)
[205] (Wickham 1998)
[206] (Hawkins 2006)
[207] (Francis 1999)
[208] (Francis 1999)

who may only come to know their need of it when a crisis arises; but also, how an MSE takes this other way of life to clergy and communities that 'know it not' (p. 31-2). Pauline Pearson, in a paper to the Windermere Deanery Chapter Residential Meeting, tried to explain the nature of her life as a priest and an MSE. As a nurse academic, she combined concerns about patient care with the demands of an academic life wrapped in her ordained life as a priest. She emphasised the importance of relationships in the world of work, their construction as networks and importance of IT in making it possible. She concluded her presentation by saying:

> *For many people, the place they call home may not be at the centre of a place they would call a 'community'. Instead, they themselves are at the hub of one of many complex webs of relationships. A lack of apparent 'community' may lead them to feel spiritually rootless, parched and to seek refreshment and rootedness. For some people, more traditional models of the church and of ministry can provide this - though they will not always be accessed in the place where people live. For others, the church needs to go and be where they are.* (Pearson 2007 p. 8)[209]

Pearson echoed Castells[210] about the new ways of working, the nature of communities and the experience of individualism in the type of choices made. Her emphasis throughout the paper is on the high level of expectation laid on individuals in their work and the way that patterns of work, including meetings and working with others on shared projects, requires individual direction and motivation. Work is no longer undertaken under the directly watchful eye of a supervisor, but through remote networks that necessitate a significant change in how many people experienced work when they first started on their careers.

Mark Wakefield, an MSE and at the time of presenting his paper, a senior director with the BBC, wrote:

> *I don't think there is any doubt that there is, within a lot of Christian thought, a disdain for the world of work.* (Wakefield 2010 p. 5)[211]

This disdain for the world of work is a concern often voiced by MSEs; it is not simply their role that is misunderstood, but the very nature of work is not valued by

[209] (Pearson 2007)
[210] (Castells 1996)
[211] (Wakefield 2010)

the Church. Wakefield put it down to the Greek philosophical influence that gives pre-eminence to the spirit, or essence of something, rather than valuing the practicality of construction and of creation. Wakefield went on:

> *Look around you and what do you see? Nothing other than the fruits of human labour. This building, the chairs on which you sit, the clothes on your backs, the iPhone or Blackberry or whatever in your pockets - all this has come about by the work of human hands transforming matter from one thing into another.* (Wakefield 2010 p. 6)[212]

The examples given are those of modern MSEs, using the tools of networking, 'iPhone or Blackberry or whatever in your pockets'. The concern therefore is that the church's incomprehension is not just about the nature of modern working life, but also the mechanisms by which it operates.

4.4.2 MSEs' experience of church

In the light of Castells'[213] vision of modern life, how do MSEs see the church to which they are aligned? In Castells' analysis, churches are residual, traditional communities that at their own choice sit aside from a digitised world in which information flows are the determining factors of social relatedness. Wakefield pointed out that the church does not keep a record of the number of MSEs in its midst, and while recent statistical work carried out at Church House is beginning to clarify the issue, there is no strategy to maximise the input or contribution of MSEs to the future direction of the church, other than as Morgan pointed out, to support parish life.[214] Fraser Dyer, a human resources expert and priest is quoted in the *Church Times* as saying:

> *The Church could do a whole lot more to help people think about how their faith engages with work. Churches haven't really got their heads round it.* (Dyer in Doney 2007 p. 18)[215]

Wakefield expressed this view more fully:

> *A friend of mine, a life-long believer, told me that the church's silence on the workplace only added to his uneasy feeling that it all too often sees its members as existing to nurture and sustain its continued institutional existence, rather than seeing itself as a means of*

[212] (Wakefield 2010)
[213] (Castells 1996)
[214] (Morgan 2013)
[215] (Doney 2007)

> *preparing them for their task of witness to a generally unbelieving world.* (Wakefield 2010 p. 15)[216]

There are numerous stories like this in the archive used in this study. Some of the most touching come from parishioners at St Martin's church in Epsom where Michael Ranken, an early mover and shaker in the MSE movement, was attached. Their letters tell of his sermons, prayers and teaching, speaking to them of a world they knew and lived in, in contrast to that seemingly ignored by the parish clergy. In an evening discussion organised in the parish to help validate the writings by Ranken in the archive, the parishioners spoke in detail about this difference. Like Wakefield, they expressed a sense that the church institution could neither relate to the world of work, nor fully utilise the potential contribution made by MSEs to it.

4.5 Conclusion

Castells'[217] description of change following the application of informationalism to societies shows how it has occurred more rapidly in some places than others. His suggestion that some communities might choose to remain outside this process seems to be applicable to the church in the light of the analysis to this point. Such a choice complements a view of the extant ecclesiology as a system of thinking that was concerned with maintaining the *status quo* and seemingly equipped to resist the impact of the emerging and prevalent culture. As the sense of place and geography changed in society, the church, especially as reflected in the episcopal decision-making does not appear prepared to either come to terms with the implications of this change or to grasp it as an opportunity. In reflecting further on the archival collection from MSEs, the picture revealed is one of a group of ordained clerics well placed to both respond and lead on such change. The picture of an under-utilised cadre becomes stronger and raises questions about episcopal decision-making, emergent strategy and policy, and the apparent preparedness to ignore if not actively alienate, the group of clergy best placed to have an impact in this new cultural context. However, the context of the analysis needs to be

[216] (Wakefield 2010)
[217] (Castells 1996)

extended. The beginning of MSE coincides with two other major societal changes. The first is the development of post-modernism, and the other, not unrelated, is a stronger narrative about secularism in society. Key to contextualising these two developments in relation to MSE is an insight into the events of the 1960s as the MSE role emerged. Certain concepts, like power and self, became of greater importance in the study of change in society and need to be framed in the light of the changes being considered in this study. This will be the work of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Analysis of the archive: Deconstruction of narrative

> *Our working hypothesis is that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age. This transition has been under way since at least the end of the 1950s, which for Europe marks the completion of reconstruction. The pace is faster or slower depending on the country, and within countries it varies according to the sector of activity: the general situation is one of temporal disjunction which makes sketching an overview difficult.* (Lyotard 1979 p. 3)[218]

5.1 Introduction

In chapter 3 the archive was examined from the perspective of the lived experience of the individuals concerned and what they had to say about different aspects of being MSEs. The development of MSE led to reflection on the types of concurrent social and philosophical changes, and placed this development within the history of the society in which it is located, and the particular social institutions then current. The changes described did not occur in a hermetically sealed chamber. The quotation from Jean-François Lyotard that opens this chapter are the opening sentences of his work, *The Postmodern condition:* A r*eport on knowledge*. This quotation is so often referred to that it seems otiose to draw on it. However, the extract's very currency underlines the point being made here, i.e. that the period from the 1960s through to the first decade of the twenty-first century, marked a transition from old certainties into new ways and new understandings.

Often classified as the postmodern period, a deeply influential analyst of the period was Michel Foucault.[219] His particular concern was how histories are put together and validated. Joyce Schuld described the approach in this manner:

[218] (Lyotard 1979)
[219] (Foucault 1969)

> *Foucault traces subtle and complex historical connections that demonstrate how different social environments have adapted and been changed by very particular and concrete instruments of power.* (Schuld 2004 p. 62)[220]

Foucault brought together a concern about the way in which the narrative of any particular history has been constructed, along with the assertion that such constructions reflect the power bases that were operational when such constructions occurred. For Foucault, this link between history and power is a useful tool to explore societal processes and the way in which knowledge is identified as being knowledge. It therefore becomes relevant to apply such questions to MSE experiences. Foucault developed two techniques to enable him to explore his suspicions about how knowledge was developed, presented and used. He described the first as archaeology of knowledge. This was an examination of the techniques by which the history and context of particular areas of knowledge had been drawn together, especially when those areas appeared to sit outside the mainstream of thought and study. The second technique was to establish a genealogy of knowledge, that is, a description of how over time knowledge had been transformed to meet different criteria and expectations. Underpinning these methods of working was the drawing together of what Foucault described as the archive. This was the base on which knowledge statements rested. Then, through these processes, he laid open the ways in which interpretation and omission had determined the conclusions reached and the applications chosen. It was through these techniques that the discontinuities, suppressions and underpinning metanarratives were exposed. These techniques enabled Foucault to create the disturbances in modernity's pursuit of perfection, which, along with Lyotard,[221] Jacques Derrida,[222] Paul Ricoeur[223] and others, opened up new fields of criticism of rationality and power. Using these techniques, as developed and applied by Richardson,[224] will enable a deconstruction of the received story from the interface of individual and institution.

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[220] (Schuld 2004)
[221] (Lyotard 1979)
[222] (Derrida 1967)
[223] (Ricoeur 1960)
[224] (Richardson & St Pierre 2005)

One of Foucault's central themes was how power was exercised in society, and therefore how that society's history was reported. Marwick[225] provided a basis for examining this from the perspective of the social history of the 1960s in the UK. He saw the period as a pivotal moment of change and identified a number of key factors around that. Foucault and others identified how the balance between society and individual changed, how the nature of culture was redefined and how old hierarchies were first threatened and then passed away. This was an era when respect for long-standing institutions ended and the opportunities for individual choice became possible for nearly everyone in society. This change in personal power was critical for the Church of England because as the established church, it had benefitted from the sense of permanence and position in the community both socially and geographically. However, as Sounes maybe over-bluntly but graphically described:

> *Since the Second World War, the old Christian churches had been losing authority throughout Northern Europe. England was a Christian country only in name by the late 1970s. ... by the late twentieth century the institution was a crumbling if picturesque ruin. Two world wars had eroded faith in God generally. And in the postwar world, more sophisticated, better educated generations of indigenous Britons had less time for church, while immigrants from Britain's former colonies brought their own superstitions with them. The architecture of Christianity often became simply that: beautiful old buildings opened (sometimes for a fee) as museums. The ineffectual C of E clergy were regarded by many as no longer moral leaders so much as characters of light entertainment: mostly harmless, intrinsically absurd.* (Sounes 2006 pp 371-2)[226]

While perhaps not a universally accepted interpretation, this text has the ring of truth, especially when reflecting on such TV series of the period as 'All Gas and Gaiters', which ran with high ratings on both TV and radio between 1966 and 1972, and was part of a much wider satiric cultural response to the changes of the era. Both technically and culturally, this satirising of the church and other institutions characterised the age as one of challenge, even if presented gently. Other changes included how the Church of England responded to its responsibility

[225] (Marwick 1998)
[226] (Sounes 2006)

for so many buildings of marked historical significance. Closing churches and moves to charge for entry gave a sense of an institution struggling to find its place in a world of increasing organisation. Sandbrook drew attention to *Honest to God*[227] whose publication was a significant event:

> *The success of* Honest to God *makes sense only in a wider social and cultural context. Robinson was already a contentious public figure after his appearance in the Lady Chatterley trial, and he profited from the fact that he was the first Anglican theologian to bring the fashionable religious ideas of European thinkers to a domestic audience. Virtually nothing in* Honest to God *was original, with Robinson's ideas generally being borrowed from the likes of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich. More importantly, the book appeared at a particularly auspicious moment. The late fifties and early sixties had been a period of intense moral debate, as existing values were challenged by affluence, mobility and modernity. Discussions about teenage delinquency and sexual misconduct reflected wider concerns about morality and social identity, and a book like* Honest to God *was well placed to exploit them. It was also very well timed because established religion in Britain was thought to be under unprecedented threat. Robinson himself insisted: 'If Christianity is to survive, let alone recapture "secular" man, there is no time to lose.' Two months before his book was published Monica Furlong had written in the* Guardian *that the 'best thing about being a Christian at the moment is that organized religion has collapsed ... It is common knowledge that the foundations have shivered, that there are cracks a mile wide in the walls'.* (Sandbrook 2006 p. 438)[228]

The challenge to the Church of England to come to terms publically with the debate on new understandings about the nature of knowledge, adapting to the new expectations of individualism and an unprecedented degree of personal affluence, includes a third element: the development of secularism. This is significant in two forms for this study. The first concerns the change from almost total dependence on notions of God, parish and local community in order to live an ordered life, to a completely secular society where all the instruments necessary for regulation of society exist outside any dependence on the Church or particular understandings of God. The second is the decreasing number of people who see religion, in particular Christianity, as a key determinant of how they will live their

[227] (Robinson 1963)
[228] (Sandbrook 2006)

lives.[229] However, in public debate, these two separate understandings are frequently unacknowledged or even conflated. In consequence, the importance of how society has secularised is lost.

5.2 Interpreting the archive

Richardson[230] considered viewing an archive through a crystal, something that can both fragment the light of a picture and can also be used to achieve a new focus on what is being examined. Crystals are themselves metaphors for the subject of this study. They are atoms that have the capacity to form bodies of different crystalline shape, determined by pressure and temperature. Indeed crystals formed from water can take several different forms for this very reason. MSEs too, can take many different forms depending on role and situation, although they all share the common component of priesthood and work. To try and understand the insights of MSEs, it is important to recognise the determinant parameters of the dialogue about MSE in the church. Hugh Valentine, referring to MSEs, wrote:

> *In England at least we appear not to have found a coherent voice, or to articulate a convincing case, or to have mounted an effective challenge (friendly, of course) to the 'normative' model of priesthood or (more necessary still) the creeping condition known as 'clericalism'.* (Valentine 2013)[231]

Valentine, who as an MSE has held senior social service positions and ran a major charity, speaks meaningfully on the website about the difficulty of understanding MSE when the normative nature of priesthood is still the stipendiary parish priest, but adds a second point about clericalism. He claims that the laity does not understand how the life of the church is constrained by the practices of ordained priests. This observation points once more to the construction of the role of MSE and the perception associated with it. MSEs undertake their role against this back-drop. Any deconstruction of the role needs to start from where the majority of clergy see themselves. This is confirmed in different ways in the archive of this study through the comments that MSEs make. The lack of understanding, if not

[229] (Taylor 2007)
[230] (Richardson & St Pierre 2005)
[231] (Valentine 2013)

outright hostility from many parish priests, was identified from various sources in the archive. The lack of contribution to parish life by MSEs and the nature of post-ordination training where the only concern is the skills acquisition necessary for priests in a parish setting is the common concern. Morgan's work illuminates the concern about MSEs as an underused parish resource.[232] Morgan worked with a steering group when undertaking her research which reflected the interests of several, if not a majority of diocesan bishops in England, that the resource that MSEs and NSMs represent should be maximised for parochial positions. With these institutional pressures, the challenge of deconstruction is severe, and a large strong crystal is needed to examine both the parochialism and the implicit clericalism.

Tim Hurren, an MSE who has worked as a social activist and bookseller in the North of England, shared a paper privately with a small number of MSEs in which he shines an interesting light on the disjunction that is being ignored (personal communication). Reading from Saint Peter's first letter, he analyses what he argues to be the advice given by the writer on how to establish a church. He notes the priority given to the calling to be church rather than to ordained ministry; the call is to be community and the call is to mission. The focus is on the laity, not the ordained ministry, with the concern for the priesthood of all people. This produces an empowered laity. Hurren observes however, that modern clergy describe laity empowerment as the clergy having to give up part of their own roles. He is critical of the fact that 'laity' has come to mean the non-ordained people, rather than the traditional meaning of all people involved in the work of God. This description of clericalism puts the difficulties faced by MSEs into a wider context when determining their role in the church. It is no longer simply the role being blocked in some way by other ordained clergy who may to some degree feel threatened by the bi-modal nature of the MSE role where parish life is not the central feature; rather, it begins to open a different perspective when looked at through the crystal. When defining their role in relation to the laity, the MSE's ill-fitting role highlights

[232] (Morgan 2013)

the parochial clergy's more highly defined role. One might assert the converse of that as well: that parochial clergy struggle to frame their own roles in a world that is redefining itself around them. Part of the deconstruction is revealing not simply confusion arising from lack of clarity about the role for both MSEs and parish priests in a changing world, but a more public commentary about the role of parish priests in society at large with criticism of their being out of touch with the modern world. Hurren acknowledges (in a personal communication) that basing his analysis on Peter leads to a description of the approach as a Palestinian, i.e. someone who focuses on the role of the people, rather than the clerics. Such a perspective merges with the early church, before clergy became a specialist group in the church. The laity were the servants of God called to exercise a particular ministry alongside the other ministries found among the laity. However, Roland Allen,[233] basing his analysis on the writings of Paul, came to similar conclusions, having examined the issue nearly a century before Hurren. It is not possible therefore to associate either description with a particular historical period. It is an indication that the role of ordained minister has changed significantly during the life of the church, in time and place and in role and purpose.

Ranken was a chemist and one of the earliest MSEs. He left an untapped treasure trove of observations about priesthood in the 'letters' that he wrote for his parish magazine and were collected in the archive used for this study. They shine lights on how the 'worker priest' role developed in the 1980s and 1990s. He was the moving spirit behind the formation of *CHRISM* and believed strongly in the need for people in this role to share experiences and learn from it. However, he also took the opportunity through his 'letters' to share some of his and his colleagues' insights with the parishioners in St Martin's church at Epsom where he was also a curate. In February 1993 he wrote that:

> *MSEs are beginning to say that we are 'to help ourselves and others to celebrate the presence of God and the holiness of life in our work, and to see and tell the Christian story there'.* (Ranken 1993 p. 1)[234]

[233] (Allen 1912)
[234] (Ranken 1993)

This observation opens another line of insights about how to unravel the reported MSE experience. Bishops in the twenty first century are keen to get MSEs more deeply involved in parish life, to preside at services and provide the sacraments of the Church for the laity. Ranken and his colleagues were going down a different path. The view that MSEs need to be doing more in church implies that this is the place where the Eucharist and the sacraments are available. This is true, but for Ranken and his colleagues that is not exclusively so. However, it also suggests that church as a place is of great significance because of its holiness and being able to do holy things there and implies that there are very particular ways of doing what might be known as rituals. It validates the notion of church that it is only when the faithful are gathered in the holy place with their priest that God can be truly present. It generates a sense of exclusivity that plays into the clericalism and the separateness of parish life from the rest of the less ordered and more unpredictable events of daily life. It also suggests that the Sabbath is a day of greater importance because it is that day on which attention is paid to Godly things. This belief suggests that this is the only day on which attention is paid to Godly things, and that there are very particular ways of doing them, thus justifying the pre-eminence of the parish, its church and the priest in ecclesiological thinking.

If the assumption is that the parish and its church are the centre of Christian life, then the eminence of parochial stipendiary clergy and the creeping clericalism of worship being necessarily led by an ordained or at least licensed minister, are all confirmed. What Ranken argues in his parish ‘letters’ is that while the parish is where people live and the church is where people meet for public worship, with the parish priest there to ‘look after everyone’, MSEs were pursuing a different path. He indicates a focus on God outside of the parish church and away from the parish; that it is possible to be holy in the work place and not just in church, and that God is as present in the work as in the sacraments and Eucharist. The phrase quoted above, ‘to celebrate the presence of God and the holiness of life in our work’, points even deeper into the meaning of MSE ministry. The Eucharist is the

service in which Christians celebrate the presence of God; what Ranken is shattering, rather like the light going through the crystal, is any sense that Eucharistic worship is the exclusive way of experiencing God's presence. He is arguing that God is equally present in the work that is being done. He is conscientious in his writing in referring to work as both paid and unpaid, and that managing the home is as much work as studying at the laboratory bench at which he researched dietetics. Even more interestingly, he refers to the 'holiness of life in our work'. Holiness is a state achieved through the grace of God given through the sacraments, through prayer and through the pattern of Christian living. Gently, but firmly, Ranken is asserting that such grace is present through the activities of work by using the talents given by God. The exclusivity of the parochial function and of the parish priest is denied and the nature of life as a grace-filled member of the laity alongside whom the MSE works becomes apparent. The crystal reveals a different insight about the nature of God and creation, sometimes referred to as Kingdom theology, which underpins Ranken's assertions.

A further and not inconsequential point can be gleaned from a close reading of Ranken's 'letters'. On the opposite sheet of the magazine to many of his letters is the list of parish officers with their contact details. Ranken first appears as church warden in February 1974. When he is ordained he is then listed among the clergy as MSE in the parish. Throughout his tenure the various priests who served in the parish listed their days off. Ranken does not have such a day allocated. This is a phenomenon associated with MSEs confirmed by Morgan in her study.[235] MSEs do not have 'days off'; theirs is, in a very real sense, a more complete ontological phenomenon. There is no day off from the life of a worker priest; the incarnational focus makes it quite literally a full-time occupation, as indeed any working person might describe their occupation. This contrast is marked because for MSEs, their career – and most of them appear to be in professions requiring significant training and development – is outwith any notion of career within the church. Their supposed 'days off' and 'free-time' is what they give to the parish, in stark contrast

[235] (Morgan 2010)

to parish priests who take their time away from their role. MSEs give that free time to the parish, having taken their priestly roles to whatever their work roles are. Ranken observed:

> *There is a third aspect, the ministry of the priest before the altar. ... Like the Hebrew priests, we enter the sanctuary alone or with our brother priests. Few or none of those whose work we share will be nearby, yet we offer all of the sacrifices which they have brought before us, in the one cup, on their behalf and the world's.* (Ranken 1998 p. 282)[236]

In addressing the theology of the MSE, Ranken links the work life experience of priesthood with the parish role. The role is not to support parish life, but to bring the concerns that have been part of the world of work to public worship. The Communion table becomes the place where heaven and earth can be seen to meet in the person, prayers and teaching of the MSE. As in all sacraments, this is the external sign of a hidden and interior act: the grace-filled nature of the life of work. In this context work itself becomes a sacrament full of grace. The crystal therefore reveals a role that is not only located away from a parish, but is capable of doing work in the parish, where the MSE is called to help make holy those aspects of daily work that do not cross the threshold into church. While being able to fulfil the sacramental role of the parish priest, the MSE is a priest at all times in the public place of work and when in their non-work role. This situation illuminates something of the complex difference MSEs represent in the ecclesiological context as non-normative but fully fledged ordained ministers enacting a role that does not need the traditional clerical trappings and rituals to give it authority.

5.3 Power and social history

In the 1960s the Church of England agreed to develop MSEs and license their ministry. The history of that decision-making was addressed in chapter 1. This was an era of very marked social change in England. The change was complex and the consequences were in many ways unanticipated. While Castells[237,238] and others pointed to the influence of IT development, Marwick painted a more

[236] (Ranken 1998)
[237] (Castells 1989)
[238] (Castells 1996)

nuanced picture. He saw the sixties as a key decade for social change whose outcomes are still alive and were also key influences on institutions in Britain. He described the extensive list of factors as follows:

> *What I set out here is a numbered list of developments, characterizing and expressing the significance of my 'cultural revolution', or 'long sixties'; some emerged out of one or more of the other developments, and most interacted with each other. ... I mix developments in which there is a high element of willed human agency and developments in which economic, technological, or demographic imperatives were of great importance.*
>
> *1. The formation of new subcultures and movements, generally critical of, or in opposition to, one or more aspects of established society. ...*
>
> *2. Closely associated with these was an outburst of entrepreneurialism, individualism, doing your own thing. ...*
>
> *3. The rise to positions of unprecedented influence of young people, with youth subculture having a steadily increasing impact on the rest of society, dictating taste in fashion, music, and popular culture generally. ...*
>
> *4. Important advances in technology: ...*
>
> *5. The advent, as a consequence in particular of the almost universal presence of television, of 'spectacle' as an integral part of the interface between life and leisure. ...*
>
> *6. Unprecedented international cultural exchange, ...*
>
> *7. Massive improvements in material life, ...*
>
> *8. Upheavals in race, class, and family relationships. ...*
>
> *9. 'Permissiveness' - that is to say, a general sexual liberation, ...*
>
> *10. New modes of self-presentation, involving emancipation from the old canons of fashion, and rejoicing in the natural attributes of the human body. ...*
>
> *11. A participatory and uninhibited popular culture. ...*
>
> *12. Original and striking (and sometimes absurd) developments in élite thought - associated with the structuralists and post-structuralists, e.g. Barthes, Foucault, Althusser, and also with Marcuse, Marshall McLuhan, etc. ...*
>
> *13. The continued existence, and indeed expansion, of a liberal, progressive presence within the institutions of authority, the characteristic which I have defined as 'measured judgement'. ...*
>
> *14. Against that, we must place the continued existence of elements of extreme reaction, concentrated in particular in the various police forces but also in certain religious bodies. ...*
>
> *15. New concerns for civil and personal rights, and a new willingness to become involved in often risky action on behalf of these. ...*

16. The first intimations of the electrifying challenges implicit in the concept of the entire West as a collection of multicultural societies. ... (Marwick 1998 pp 17-20)[239]

This rather extended quotation summarises Marwick's position and reveals the complex matrix of social change that was taking place during that period. Various writers have addressed the same phenomena from different perspectives,[240],[241],[242] but there is a shared position that the 1960s was a period of remarkable change, almost as if things had been brewing for a long period and in that decade the differences became apparent. Marwick's list is illuminating when trying to crystallize the phenomenon of MSE. All of the items listed had an impact on perceptions of the church and on church life itself; several of them in particular. The church was seen as part of the established society and it was therefore criticised for its attitudes to women, war and other civil rights issues of the period. This went hand-in-hand with a new individualism made possible because of improving wages and greater consumer choice. The individualism was heavily influenced by the developments in the media, especially in television, but also the increased availability of telephones in the home as well as at work. These factors helped to change the nature of family life, allowing the creation of more extended families in personal terms and also geographically as more people moved away for work, or simply for a better quality of life than their parents had enjoyed. They could stay in touch by telephone and share the same entertainment through the 'telly'. As in society generally, liberal influences emerged in the church, typified by Bishop John Robinson's work *Honest to God*. Robinson was known as the Bishop who went to court to help defend D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Simultaneously, in the religious body of the Church of England itself there were extreme reactions to the social changes and the more generally available theological developments that underpinned such liberality. Church life was also changing culturally and ethnically as the 1950s wave of Afro-Caribbean migrants began to join local church communities, and in some settings came to be the

[239] (Marwick 1998)
[240] (Sandbrook 2006)
[241] (Donnelly 2005)
[242] (Sounes 2006)

numerical majority. Above all else perhaps was the availability of cheaper cars, leading increasingly to families taking Sunday as the day to go exploring and have their ‘day out’. This was the final break with the geographic and traditional social practice links with Sunday church worship. Quite rapidly social wealth meant that personal choice could be exercised to a fuller degree and that included not following the traditional pattern of Sunday worship.

The significance of this cultural change has routinely been aligned with the fall in church attendance, the reduced number of babies brought for baptism, and the lower number of people coming forward for confirmation. Peter Brierley and Kim Miles in their series of reports on church attendance charted how the changes occurred from the 1960s onwards.[243] Brown, who studied church attendance and religious practice back into the late eighteenth century, took the fall in attendance as a marker of developing secularisation.[244] While the actual nature of the secularisation and the significance in the fall of attendance and engagement with the church continues to be debated (for example Bruce[245,246] and Martin[247,248]), McLeod, who also followed Marwick’s[249] analysis, believed that the changes were deep rooted, tracing them back to the early twentieth century.[250] These publications coincide with the earliest modern writings on the subject of MSE. The longer historical perspective confirms the change in society and church. Such an analysis points to the fact that the change in relationship between believers and church was founded on fundamental, but not always obvious processes of social change that became most apparent in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The ‘experiment’ in MSE therefore could not have been timelier and its gestation matches this long period of change. Given the timeliness of the beginning of MSE the question is still why it has so little influence on the thinking of the church.

[243] (Brierley and Miles 2006)
[244] (Brown 2001)
[245] (Bruce 2002)
[246] (Bruce 2011)
[247] (Martin 2003)
[248] (Martin 2005)
[249] (Marwick 1998)
[250] (McLeod 2007)

Reflecting on the church as a body again, a number of conditions can exist in the physical body for very long periods before becoming apparent. Diabetes is a well-known example, but conditions such as arthritis, leukaemia and heart disease can be present for many years before the signs and symptoms become apparent. In this scenario, the church is a body that was subject to the same changes as other social institutions, but only in the 1960s did it become sufficiently aware of it to wish to address the changes. However, rather like a patient who denies the significance of the diagnosis and on being given a prescription for therapy, chooses not to comply with it, the church appears to comply on some days and not on others. It is possible to see MSE in this context as an experimental treatment, which the body of the church commenced, but unlike a gold-standard Cochrane Systematic Review[251] had no effective evaluation component. In consequence, a radical treatment or development is permitted to be used haphazardly in the Church of England, but without any certainty of meeting the specific needs of the body of the church. At that juncture, the phenomenon of homeostasis takes over. In the human body homeostasis constantly adjusts to change, be this brought about by unstable blood sugar levels, oxygen shortage, or too much alcohol consumed. Likewise in the church, when change emerges, the change is incorporated within the portfolio of approved, or perhaps more accurately, tolerated activities. Some places will welcome the changes, but others wait to see what will happen. Homeostatic function is present as the institution carries on without showing any significant change. The development is slowly absorbed, conjugated, and then the parts that are wanted become integrated and the waste products are excreted. While this is an elementary description of how the physical body works, it is sufficiently accurate to offer a reflection on how the body of the church has reacted to MSE.

[251] (Cochrane Collaboration 2014)

This description points to the sense of individualism that each physical body has; it is constantly adapting to the circumstances of that person. This matches Marwick's analysis of the 1960s from an institutional perspective:

> *... for the sixties the starting point is the search for self-fulfilment, with or without the polemics about the evils of repression, remembering that physical constraints ... and sometimes ideological ones, meant that self-fulfilment was by no means available to everyone; remembering also that self-fulfilment for one person can mean destruction of economic and psychological security for another.* (Marwick 1998 p. 381)[252]

He adds later:

> *... my fundamental point [is] that the changes of the sixties were changes involving majorities, not simply radical activists.* (Marwick 1998 p. 716)[253]

This analysis of the 1960s illuminates the nature of the church experience at this time with a shift from regular patterns of worship, increased affluence and the exercise of choice that took people away from traditional practices. MSEs were embedded in that change in ways that their stipendiary colleagues were not. They experienced daily the differences in the workplace as trade unions began to achieve membership in non-blue collar occupations, as patterns of social engagement changed with more women in the workplace, and people living at increasing distances from their work. The geographic link between place of labour and parish was finally being lost. The choice about where to worship – indeed, whether to worship or not – became a phenomenon based on individual choice and not on family or local tradition. For many people, a priest in the workplace became the only contact with institutional religion. The industrial mission had fulfilled this function particularly in the heavy industries into the 1960s, but as the landscape of employment changed, so did the nature of ministry that could be exercised. While this analysis is common place among the sources quoted, Wickham, a moving light in the industrial mission work in the post-war period, offered another insight:

[252] (Marwick 1998)
[253] (Marwick 1998)

> *From the eighteenth century, and progressively through the nineteenth, since emergence of industrial towns, the working classes, the labouring poor, the artisan class, as a class and as adults, have been outside the churches.* (Wickham 1957 p. 215)[254]

The myth of all people from a local community being engaged in church worship was not a reality, and therefore confirms another line of analysis of this study. The significance about the changes described by Marwick from a church perspective is that it was the more skilled middle classes and the semi-professional and professional classes that were exercising their individualism, and increasingly choosing not to attend worship. Marwick summarised it thus:

> *Britain, with the lowest church attendance figures in Europe, was notably unaffected by Catholic puritanism, bible belt evangelism, or for that matter, the bourgeois stolidity of German Christian Democracy: Britain (excluding Northern Ireland where, as in the Republic, church attendance was high) was pervaded by what can conveniently be termed 'secular Anglicanism', a tolerance originating in the Anglican Church of the eighteenth century and spreading in more recent times to civil society.* (Marwick 1998 p. 35)[255]

The scenario presented is one in which the increased personal freedoms resulted not only in the trend of falling church attendance numbers, but serious questioning about how the church engaged with society's institutions, credibility and *raison d'être*. McLeod saw this as being related to the options arising from challenges to collective identities, one of which was being a practicing Anglican:

> *Perhaps the biggest change was the weakening of the collective identities that had been so important in the years before [the] 1960s. If collective identities were declining in the face of individual choice, it was partly because the former seemed to have served their purpose and to be now redundant, partly because the mechanisms for enforcing adherence to group norms had weakened, partly because a series of new possibilities were opening up, which most people had not imagined before.* (McLeod 2007 pp 259-60)[256]

MSE was one of those new possibilities. One particularly active group of MSEs is based in Coventry. They have published two accounts of their individual experiences and theological reflections on being MSEs.[257] Two examples from the

[254] (Wickham 1957)
[255] (Marwick 1998)
[256] (McLeod 2007)
[257] (MSE Group 2010)

second edition (2010), illustrate the cross-cultural work of MSEs, when seen from the perspective of the institutional church. It is important to note how this cross-culture ties back to the 1960s where roles were becoming less gender specific, women were free to work and not only be housewives, and higher education became much more available. Cultural assumptions from previous decades were no longer valid and people were behaving with very different cultural assumptions about roles and functions. MSEs reflected this in their occupations and social mores. Dawn Waterton worked in the construction industry from 1970. In 1999, she was ordained priest and licensed both to a parish and for work in her firm. In a theological reflection on her experience as an MSE, she writes:

> *The conversations we have may be at the tea machine instead of at the back of church but they are no less a building up of fellowship and community for all that. The silence following a discussion in the office about any one of a number of issues currently affecting people, may not be prefaced by 'Let us pray' but it happens, there in the silence. And the support offered to one another through listening and sometimes grumbling together is vital because for many this community is their primary community. The place where someone notices if they are not there and cares enough to find out if they are OK.*
>
> *The people I work with may not attend church, may not know the liturgy or the theology of sacrifice or redemption, but make no mistake, they 'do' the theology every day. The church has authorized my presence there as a priest to do the theology with them. (*Waterton 2010 p. 17)[258]

This comment is made by a woman who is only a priest because of changes the church made in the early 1990s and who works in construction, a stereotypically male occupation. Despite being in a counter-cultural position in both her church and her work, she is received in both as an experienced colleague at work and as an assistant priest to a parish. This example shows the kind of crossover arising from the changes of the 1960s, of women working in male-dominated professions in both situations. Her explanation of her priestly role is often mentioned by MSEs and demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness that a ritual-bound and isolationist institution would not have been able to accommodate in the 1960s. It is an example of institutional homeostasis, of change being accepted, if not fully

[258] (Waterton 2010)

explored or integrated. A colleague in the same MSE group is Felicity Smith, a doctor who was ordained priest in 1994, after having served as a deaconess and deacon. She had been inspired to study medicine by another woman doctor when it was still a male dominated profession, and she spent a significant part of her medical career in Family Planning and sexual health. She writes:

> *Working in Family Planning and sexual health we encounter a great many things the Church says 'no' to, sex before marriage, single parent pregnancy, abortion, homosexuality. My greatest reason for being an MSE in this area of life is to be an outward and visible sign that 'God in the Mass on Sunday is the same God in the Mess on Monday'. When God said 'Go forth and multiply' he gave us a remarkably strong sex drive, one that can over-ride commonsense, logic, religious and ethical boundaries and a driving force that we may need to keep constantly under control. This area of our life can be secret and hidden but the problems involved/raised need help – some of us are there to do this.* (Smith 2010 p. 27)[259]

Here is a description of a priest who actively engages in an arena that many of her clerical colleagues and parishioners might have concerns and qualms about. The role is one in which the complete frailty of human nature is exposed and tenderly held so that the best possible future can be achieved. Smith goes on to draw the obvious sacramental parallel:

> *Confession, repentance, forgiveness, absolution, coping with guilt and shame, healing, all enter the arena of this work.*
>
> *God offers us unconditional love: people fear judgement and rejection. They are crippled by feelings of guilt – often unfounded. To be heard and accepted, affirmed and helped is the work of God incarnate. Jesus himself started. It is ours to continue.* (Smith 2010 pp 27-29)[260]

Smith explores the outcome and consequences of the changes recorded in the 1960s, especially sexual liberation, available techniques to control fertility (undreamt of by earlier generations) to respond to, and help to manage the outcomes. By enabling people to access the changed resources and doing it in a non-judgmental context, Smith is providing a context to her motivation in lifting the burden of guilt and remorse and pointing to a more ordered way of life.

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[259] (Smith 2010)
[260] (Smith 2010)

These two extracts point to how the changes described by Marwick[261] have played out in the development of the MSE role. The role emerged in the same decade as the changes described. It was a period of significant social upheaval, not just in terms of distrust of institutions, but within institutions themselves. The modern worker priests of that decade were one of the responses from within the church; however, MSE was one that occurred because of the crusading spirit of a small number of senior clergy over several decades. Its approval as an experiment points to the uncertainty in how to respond. Its continuance over half a century later, like so many other developments of the sixties, acknowledges its efficacy, even if its effectiveness is not acknowledged by the church in integrating plans for its future. MSE is in many ways a typical sixties phenomenon and something that appeared to be ephemeral, but which has become a permanent part of the church landscape.

5.4 Self and secularism

Writing in 1959, Brother Edward SSF, one of the Church of England's greater missioners of the era, drew on his insights into parish life and wrote:

> *Meanwhile the worker and his family find themselves living in a new industrial pattern facing new problems, such as repetitive work, shifts, moral problems, overtime, but we in the Church have nothing to say to him; no help to give. Our preaching is largely irrelevant to him because we have no experience of his problems – we are out of contact.* (Brother Edward 1959 p. 98)[262]

This text is in the same vein as that noted by Wickham. The trend of routine church practice or engagement with the population of the last two centuries had resulted in a whole swathe of that population moving outside of this realm. Wickham was more scathing than Br Edward. He wrote about the institution:

> *Unfortunately, 'Church History', with few great exceptions, is invariably about the Church abstracted from society, about ecclesiastical institutions, personalities or movements, in which the world in which they are set seems incidental. It is itself a disturbing symptom of the preoccupation of the Church with her own life and work, suggesting at best that society is but the raw material for her work, and revealing at worst a casual indifference to the*

[261] (Marwick 1998)
[262] (Edward 1959)

> *wider life of the world in which the Kingdom of God is to be established and which she exists to serve.* (Wickham 1957 p. 12)[263]

The self-centredness of the church was challenged most severely by the changes that came to a head in the 1960s. The individualism of the 1960s meant that a new insight about 'self' had emerged. Whereas 'self' had traditionally been determined by fatherhood, place and trade, as the twentieth century progressed it had become a phenomenon determined by individual traits, dress and cultural interests. By the end of the century, the limits to personal freedoms that had existed as late as the 1950s and 1960s seemed incomprehensible, the Flower Power movement being seen as the turning point. The end of steam trains, though causally unrelated, the sexual 'revolution' with the increased availability of a reliable birth control pill, the further stirrings of feminism first seen a century before and now 'burning bras', and the commissioning of Concorde, all became symbols of future life styles and personal choice. McLeod noted that the combination of various factors in the 1960s:

> *… were explosive not because of one key ingredient, but precisely because so many currents of change, initially separate, interacted with one another. Most important was the impact of affluence, because the changing economic climate affected so many other aspects of people's lives, and opened up new possibilities.* (McLeod 2007 p. 15)

McLeod described a scenario in which the church failed to grasp the significance of the changes and became divided by the strongly re-emergent charismatic and catholic wings. He also indicated that in his view, the church leaders became absorbed in power games rather than developing strategies to respond to increasing secularism. He observed that the changes causing individuation were a focus on home and the nuclear family, companionate marriage, and the declining importance of neighbours and pressures of local customs and families (p.187).[264] The social and geographic isolation caused by these developments was a way of life not available to earlier generations and was to lead to the very different life

[263] (Wickham 1957)
[264] (McLeod 2007)

styles that came to typify the later twentieth and early twenty-first century. Wickham described the church's problem in these terms:

> *A church whose structure is mapped out in a wholly territorial and geographical shape cannot impinge effectively on the functional structures and social projections of a highly industrialized urbanized society. ... Not only men (sic) but towns too are fashioned in the image of their craft. A further important expression is seen in the city-wide projections of modern institutions such as political parties, municipal authorities, industrial associations, trade-unions, and a host of others, throwing their huge pyramids from a base of the entire city or area points to decisive power that cannot be tied down into local territorial areas.* (Wickham 1957 pp 243-4)[265]

Writing in 1957, Wickham pre-dated the massive increase of women in the workforce and the major industrial changes to the degree that occurred from the 1960s onwards, but did capture the matrix of chosen social activities, with the church being unable to manufacture a response. He used the term 'secular obedience' (p. 256) tellingly to describe how these structures engage the participants, in a way that the church might have hoped to do. He saw the integrated nature of British industry and the accompanying social matrices as completely replacing anything that the church may have hoped to generate or engage in. His conclusion was quite damning:

> *But Christianity should provide a theological perspective, an understanding of the interests of the Kingdom, a knowledge of man's nature and destiny, basic values that should be reflected in men's social relationships, that add up, if not to a social philosophy, certainly to a social critique, in the light of which human society, social programmes, and economic and industrial organization can be scrutinized, attitudes adopted and decisions made. Christianity can provide a context within which the 'ethics of the situation' become clearer. One of the most serious weaknesses and indictments of the contemporary Church is the lack of such a critique, and no amount of fidelity to the Church or even devotion to her Lord can make up for its absence. There are clear reasons for its absence. Partly, the structure of the Church does not dictate its necessity, for the Church is organized for worship and not for mission and secular engagement. Even where material exists, it is foreign to what the Church expects as her proper intellectual food. And partly, there is no planned means of continuous thinking within the Church, either on the nature of the Christian critique itself,*

[265] (Wickham 1957)

> *or on the contemporary issues upon which such a critique should bear.* (Wickham 1957 p. 258)

Wickham describes the church as an institution just before the decade of the 1960s was about to erupt on to the scene, but which appears to have chosen not to equip itself to engage in the social changes around it. For Wickham[266] and others[267,268] the emergence of a strongly secular world that did not need church to define or enable it, marked a significant challenge both to the institution itself and to the world that it purported to serve.

In this chapter I have developed some insight into the nature of the secularism alluded to in the introduction to this chapter as a valuable element in understanding more fully the accounts of their roles offered by MSEs. One simplistic view is that secularism is the state taking over the role of the church as the naivety of the population is dissipated by better and further education. Taylor gave a more explicit insight:

> *Secularization doesn't just arise because people get a lot more educated, and science progresses. This has some effect, but it isn't decisive. What matters is that masses of people can sense moral sources of a quite different kind, ones that don't necessarily suppose a God.* (Taylor 1989 p. 313)[269]

Sensing moral sources other than God and drawing on these other sources to determine how life could be lived, was related to how the sense of self had evolved in the preceding four centuries. The intellectual revolutions of the period had played their part, but what Taylor called the 'ordinary life' emerged most strongly in western civilization through the influence of the Judaeo-Christian spiritual tradition. According to Taylor it was the Reformation that had brought recognition that to relate to God did not need mediation through priest or ritual. This gave value to life outside the church's orbit to what had previously been known as profane, in contrast to sacred. Valuing the ordinary life demolished the hierarchy that was implicit in the reverence of people living a 'higher' life as monks,

[266] (Wickham 1957)
[267] (Edward 1959)
[268] (McLeod 2007)
[269] (Taylor 1989)

nuns and priests, or those engaged in civil life, or who had status through military exploits. The revolution of giving value to production and reproduction as cycles of 'ordinary life' began a process that led to the development of individualism and notions of self as understood in the late twentieth century. These changes required a language to express the development of new personal phenomena, which included a sense of existing in time and the separation of identities through the collection and recollection of person-specific memories. Taylor also highlighted the development of the companionate marriage and the subsequent demand for privacy, together with the creation of homes that separated individuals from the rest of the world. With industrialization came major population movements, but more important from Taylor's perspective, was:

> *It is a culture which is individualist in the three senses I invoked earlier: it prizes autonomy; it gives an important place to self-exploration, in particular of feeling; and its vision of the good life generally involved commitment. As a consequence, in its political language, it formulates the immunities due to people in terms of subjective rights. Because of its egalitarian bent, it conceives these rights as universal.* (Taylor 1989 p. 305)[270]

Secularism has become characteristic of a way of life in which individuals make choices for themselves, disencumbered of family, trade or church expectations. It is no longer simply a separation from church, or better education, or the impact of science. If people follow the strictures laid down by traditional bodies, then it is by self-choice, not because they do not know of other options or are coerced into following them. The key issue therefore is choice, the ability to operate subjectively and independently of other individuals in that society. The social context for such individualism has left the church grasping at straws to know how to respond. While worker priests describe themselves as Ministers in Secular Employment, the two words that attract most comment in the accounts in the archive used for this study are ministry and employment, as if they are two opposed notions that they are trying to hold together. What is rarely explored is the notion of what secular means in any particular role. Only a close reading of the archive notices the focus on the individual, on being with people in the places they choose to be, rather than on

[270] (Taylor 1989)

church property, and in ways dictated by the individual rather than what ritual prescribes. Secularism is not so much a contrast to church, but rather a response to individual need and choice in situations dictated by the needs and choices, rather than what the church requires. The absence of awareness of the nature of secularism and how the worker priests are responding to it is one of the quirks in the MSE archive, and something to explore further. It seems fair to conclude therefore that the word 'secular' has been adopted to act as a bridge unifying the two poles of ordained ministry and employment (almost always paid), without a full exploration and response to the nature of secularisation in the society in which they are engaged.

5.5 Conclusions

In this chapter three significant changes in the last five decades have been used to break open, to a degree, the archive on MSEs. This approach is important because it is impossible to assess the MSE development without identifying key elements of the social and philosophical context. This enables underlying values to be explored, but also to shape any judgement about how the role might develop.

As understanding about the nature of knowledge has changed, the social understanding about the nature of power, hierarchy and institution has also changed. It is not insignificant that the Greek word *hierarch* was used for a bishop or other senior clergy person to identify the main celebrant of the Eucharist. Yet, as Andrew Louth[271] pointed out in his study on Denys the Areopagite, the Eucharist was supposed to reflect the ordering of heaven and all God's creation. Due to the influence of the Roman Empire and then the Christian church, this sense of hierarchy had become embedded in western European cultures over many centuries and becoming the foundation for both secular and spiritual power. It was Foucault[272] and his post-modern colleagues, especially Ricoeur,[273]

[271] (Louth 1989)
[272] (Foucault 1969)
[273] (Ricoeur 1960)

Derrida[274] and Lyotard[275] who developed the intellectual tools to enable this sense of hierarchy – and therefore unquestioned power – to be explored and re-evaluated, especially how it was exercised through institutions in the twentieth century.

Using the crystal to 'scatter' the light, it becomes clear that the social changes were linked to significant shifts in ways of thinking. One key change was the development of personal choice. The need to conform to received social mores dissolved and with it the pre-eminent place of the church and the parish priest as its representative. In particular, this transformation in social perceptions led to a new approach to personal morals and the place of sexual practice in the community. This was part of a wider process that undermined inherited regard for the 'establishment', both in terms of social structure and more especially concerning views about dress, career progression and which roles or professions held pre-eminence in society. There was a new sense of self, and the right to focus personal decision-making around personal wishes and 'needs', perhaps more accurately understood as 'wants'.

This emergence of personal choice and with it a strong sense of individualism was a significant challenge to any sense of institution. Government, education and the law struggled to live with the new approach, and so did the Church of England. With the changes in social structure came a loss of sense of collective identities, among them the parish, as increasing numbers of people lived and worked in different places. The pressures to attend church began to diminish as Sundays became the day off for the family to enjoy the newly available consumables and activity choices, especially the 'car-ride'. Social obedience had shifted from the church to the secular organisations of the age, especially the work community. The trade unions and professional organisations, each with their emergent codes of conduct, were in many ways not dissimilar to the expectations of a Christian

[274] (Derrida 1967)
[275] (Lyotard 1979)

community. However, they used social expectation and regulation rather than divine command and church practice to shape the nature of the moral framework for public life.

In parallel to this, the Anglican priesthood had been going through significant shifts, ultimately with the coming of the new worker priests in the 1960s, who kept their professions and roles while also serving in a parish. They saw their key purpose to be working alongside people in their occupations or field of practice, Christian and otherwise, and in so doing enable work to be valued as God's on-going creation where it was undertaken. This was reflected in various ways, but perhaps most significantly in the underlying theology supporting the thinking; this was incarnational, utilising understandings of what is known as Kingdom theology, with little reference to redemption. MSEs were not there to redeem the workplace, but to engage actively with it as a God-given good. It meant that the Eucharist, the central Christian act of prayer and worship, became an offering up of what had been done, as part of the sacrifice of the people, rather than a calling down of God to redeem what the people had done wrong. This also reflects the individualism identified as the social realisation of personal deeds and individual actions that began to be more publicly assimilated into church practice and understanding.

Parish clergy were starting on a new journey as numbers of people worshipping began to fall and their recognised public role lost its prominence in the local community. Over time, they acquired new and different skills to supplement their training and experience, but even in the twenty-first century they were still often seen to be out of touch and unconnected with the on-going debates about women bishops and gay marriage. They were confronted with the same challenge that MSEs had faced, i.e. what to do with the new secularism and how best to respond to it. There had been a marked change in how the ordained role was perceived and whether to describe the parish priest's role in particular as increased clericalism or professionalism is a moot point, but MSEs also faced the same problem. MSEs had a growing sense of what ministry in employment meant, but

they were not engaging with what ‘secular’ meant in this context. Here was the new post-modern age with its disrespectful culture, its challenges to life-style and behaviours and its disregard for institutions and establishment. The question is, how did the church respond to this challenge to its place in society as an institution and what role did or do MSEs play in helping to shape and deliver this response?

In beginning the deconstruction of the narrative therefore certain things have become clear. First, the power structures of society at large and the church in particular began a fundamental process of change in the 1960s. It is clear that the church responded slowly to this, probably because of the homeostatic process described earlier, because of a tendency to assimilate and then make only the most moderate of changes in order to maintain a form of stability and functionality. Second, in maintaining the institution as inherited, the church lost a sense of mission. A focus on ritual and parish as community reduced its capacity to engage in mission with people who did not fall within this parish church based ministry or with those who were engaging with people in their workplaces. In consequence, a new form of thinking began around the sacramentality of the workplace with a focus on the worker as God’s incarnational agent, working to bring to completion, even perfection the on-going process of creation. The worker was therefore not someone who primarily needed to be redeemed but one who was working for the Kingdom, a shared if sometimes hidden ministry, an act that was itself grace giving and salvific. With the MSEs came a need to reconsider the ontology of priesthood. MSEs were not taking ‘days-off’; they were working like everyone else and using their time at work and time away from their principal occupations and professions to support the life of the parish. This was not a priesthood that could be switched on and off. It was something that was totally consuming and not simply some hidden sacramental mark endowed on the individual through ordination. Into this understanding came the question of secularism. As the perception changed from being a counterpoint to the sacred and therefore the church, secularism was adopted by worker priests to identify something about the nature of their role. However, the adoption of the role appears not to have been thought through. The

failure to explore secularism properly has meant that the nature of the role of MSEs, i.e. dealing with people whose moral base does not require a god, from the position of those whose role is determined by a belief in one God, has remained both confused and not utilised to its capacity by the church. This confusion will be explored further in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

What the MSE experience indicates about the institution

> *The struggle has not been, as I hear many people say that it is for them, to reconcile the ways of a puzzling and often hostile world with a relatively confident religious faith. For me it is the other way round. My working world is filled with things that I find true and trustworthy: it is the things said by religion which are obscure and puzzling.* (Ranken 2001 p. vii)[276]

6.1 Introduction

Describing MSEs as priests 'on the boundary'[277] has become commonplace, but in reality is an unhelpful simplification. While the expression reflects the experience of being on the boundary that MSEs have some of the time, it does not illuminate anything significant about either the role or the ecclesiology that has led to the creation of MSEs. Indeed as Ranken[278] wrote, the boundary may be with the church and not the world of work. In the capacity of ministerial reviewer, I often heard similar comments from parish priests, reflecting their experience of being different and having a different type of social engagement to those normally experienced in the community around them. It may therefore be a key part of ordained priesthood to experience a sense of boundary in the physical activities of the role because being part of the spiritual role is experiencing the liminality of the divine from the perspective of the physical.

In accepting that the ontology of ordained priesthood includes a sense of being committed, or perhaps even condemned, to the boundaries, it is important to ask what a reflection on the MSE role reveals about this and whether it is fair to assume that the perception of being boundaried by parish priests and MSEs is intrinsically different or in reality the same thing but from a different perspective. The challenge seems to be to identify what the boundary is and why it is perceived to be there. Role descriptions are poor in the Church of England, therefore it is not

[276] (Ranken 2001)
[277] (Hacking 1990)
[278] (Ranken 2001)

possible to identify perceived boundaries as a function of how particular roles are defined. It may, however, have something to do with another perspective on this. In examining the MSE archive, it is all but impossible to find references to the church as an institution; all references are to the church as an organisation and in terms of organisational activity. In these terms therefore the boundariedness comes from engagement with a body that performs rather badly as an organisation. The criticisms are about time management, budgetary abilities (or lack of them), personal relationship management, and inability to engage in decision-making in ways that reflect modern approaches to organisational activity.

The criticisms come from individuals usually highly skilled in organisational work who live (and perhaps die by) their work diaries, whose day-to-day work requires them to be highly competent operators. As Ranken[279] implies in the quote opening this chapter, MSEs work in situations where there is a degree of certainty about the purpose of their engagement. Such work is usually project oriented and there are explicit and shared outcomes to be achieved within agreed timescales. This is characteristic of an organisation where activities can be accounted for numerically. It is understandable therefore that MSEs would look at the church in terms of being an organisation and find it inadequate. The sense of accountability that goes with management structures, measured outcomes, reporting structures and processes and numeric analysis of achievement come low on the agenda of the church. How are the perceptions of the parish priest accounted for, especially as the parish priest is the normative figure for the Church of England? One line of analysis is that parish priests do not see the Church of England as an organisation, but as an institution, and a body called to an eternal task rather than some project outcome within an agreed timescale. In this context, Christian mission is not a time-limited and resource constrained project, but a process and a way of life that has no ending. Numbers are only passing indicators, not definitions of success or failure, achievement or inadequacy.

[279] (Ranken 2001)

Although this study does not examine directly the differences between parish priests and MSEs, the normative-non-normative nature of the two roles is important. This difference was described until comparatively recently by the most basic variants, i.e. how the individual is prepared for the role. Traditionally, people called primarily to parish ministry went away to college for two to three years and studied the role purposefully during that time. In contrast, the MSEs were prepared on a part-time programme that enabled them to continue earning an income. The college students would most usually be seeking a permanent parish position while the MSEs would already be attached to a parish and be continuing in their work-life. One perception therefore is that even from the beginning of their respective ministerial 'careers' the individuals experienced a completely different orientation: one to an institution, the other to an organisation. The criticism that worker priests were inadequately prepared contains an element of truth; not because there was no compulsory Greek or detailed study of Patristics, but because the nature of the initiation was not simply to two different roles, but to undertake radically different functions, both of which require different approaches and understandings. It is unsurprising therefore that the two roles do not understand each other. More surprising is the fact that the MSE role has persisted despite this gap in training aims and outcomes.

6.2 What the Church has said about MSEs since 1958

The work of Vaughan[266] was identified as describing the history of MSE up to 1958. At that time the use of MSEs was approved as an 'experiment' in the Anglican Church and was an almost inevitable decision, given that Bishops in several different Anglican Provinces had been ordaining men (it was only men then) for MSE for some time (pp 178-183).[280] However, in England MSE had been the 'baby' of a limited number of Bishops and it was the persistence of the then Bishop of Southwark that led to the creation of the first course in 1960. Since then, however, there has been no formal policy decision on the development in England. A number of reviews of MSE have been undertaken at both national and diocesan

[280] (Vaughan 1990)

level. The Church in Wales undertook such a review in 1980, producing a report in 1981[281] in part to develop a picture of ministry before the first ordination of women as self-supporting deacons. This was not the first report to include some consideration of MSE, but in identifying the framework for such a study, the report shaped subsequent investigations. The study by the Church in Wales involved 40 self-supporting ministers and a focus group drawn from that number in one diocese to act as a sub-group in the formulation of the report. The document identified a check-list, subsequently used by Fuller and Vaughan[282] and used in other studies. The MSEs identified themselves in the following roles:

> *(a) as an interpreter of the church to the world and of the world to the church;*
>
> *(b) as an informal teacher, in down-to-earth theology and ethics;*
>
> *(c) as a counsellor with understanding of problems borne of shared experience;*
>
> *(d) as a confessor, speaking wisely of repentance and forgiveness;*
>
> *(e) as a comforter of the distressed and bereaved;*
>
> *(f) as a reconciler between man (sic) and God and between different people, whether as individuals or groups;*
>
> *(g) as an intercessor who prays for all with whom and for whom he works; and,*
>
> *(h) as the nucleus of a Christian group.* (Church in Wales 1981 p. 22)[283]

The Welsh Bench of Bishops' Report was published less than twenty years after the first courses for MSEs had begun. Writing in 1964, as MSEs appeared, Leslie Paul had been cautious about the impact of the innovation, reading the development as an extension of the undertakings of a handful of priests who had departed parish ministry to undertake employment in the workplace (pp 156-7).[284] Paul's report, commissioned by the Church of England, remains a magisterial review of the deployment challenges emerging in the post-war period. His acknowledgement of the significance of this development, in parallel with developments in the different fields of chaplaincy and the need to extend the apostolic role of the laity, point to recognition of the problem and need for a response that included MSE, but did not provide suggestions about how to meet

[281] (Working Group on Self-Supporting Ministry. 1981)
[282] (Fuller & Vaughan 1986b)
[283] (Working Group on Self-Supporting Ministry. 1981)
[284] (Paul 1964)

the major structural changes needed to incorporate and exploit the potential of the role; the focus of the report remained the parish.

William H. Smith was commissioned by the Advisory Council for the House of Bishops in 1975 to review the first seven years of training for self-supporting ministers.[285] He recounts the developments that had occurred outside the Provinces of Canterbury and York and the range of titles spawned. He used the title 'Honorary Ministry' to describe the 183 men trained up to that point (pp 8-9). This title confirms a distinction that has remained a concern for all non-stipendiary ministers i.e. that the key difference in their ministry is simply one of remuneration. Smith clarified another important distinction between 'Honorary Ministry' and 'Specialised Ministries'. This led to a confusion that is still present from time to time, but hinges on who the pay master is. The concern with titles took a quirky turn when Saumarez Smith suggested pelagian tendencies in the title 'Self-supporting', where he found some denial of the orthodox Christian view of being supported by God (p. 8). Saumarez Smith's report had antecedents. These included the Welsby Report,[286] a report by de Waal and Montague,[287] and a short document commissioned by General Synod from Melinsky.[288] This raft of reviews points to the organisational and theological uncertainty about the development of MSE and the degree of interest in it. While 183 people had started life in this role by 1975, Saumarez Smith pointed out that in 1976 there were a further 230 being trained. This increase in numbers pointed to a rapid, if not meteoric, rate of development when compared with so many other changes in church life. Saumarez Smith's conclusion, driven from the parish perspective of this development, commended some revision of the Bishops' regulation for this form of ordained ministry, but did not engage with the increasing diversity in ministry.[289]

[285] (Smith 1977)
[286] (Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry 1968)
[287] (de Waal and Montague 1968)
[288] (Melinsky 1974)
[289] (Smith 1977)

Smith's report does confirm, however, the rapid and unplanned approach to this development.

The next key Church of England document is another Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry (ACCM) paper, which is a joint publication of practice reflection by Ranken and theological exploration by Rayner and Woolcombe.[290] This too had its antecedents, prompted by a decision in November 1981 by the ACCM to review discussion since the Smith report in 1977 with a view to developing a strategy for the church's ministry. Two documents emerged. A report by John Tiller was published by ACCM and was a strategic attempt to view developments through to 2023.[291] The second document was a report by Mark Hodge for the General Synod.[292] Both documents focused on NSM as a way of meeting the short-fall of stipendiary clergy at parochial level with only passing reference to MSE. By the time the ACCM document authored by Rayner,Ranken and Woolcombe was published (1989) the debate had moved on and it was no longer simply a question of parochial needs and proper titling. The church was experiencing the role of NSM in a number of different ways, both as parochial assistants, but also as a cadre of worker priests who saw their calling to be in the work-place. In that 1989 publication Ranken made two important points. The first was that the development of NSM and MSE occurred at a time when many other changes in notions of ministry both in the Anglican and other Christian traditions in the UK were underway (p. 8). These included greater involvement of the laity, the development of pastoral workers, deacons taking on a clearer ministry in their own right, and the culmination of the debate about the ordination of women to the priesthood. The second point made by Ranken was the distinction between NSM and MSE. He underlined the experience of NSMs who were primarily parish focused and therefore aligned with the needs of parishes and ministry in that place. In contrast, he upheld Allen's arguments[293] and saw MSE as an essentially missionary

[290] (Rayner et al. 1989)
[291] (Tiller 1983)
[292] (Hodge 1983b)
[293] (Allen 1930)

development locally placed and led (Ranken 1989 pp 16-17).[294] Rayner[295] picked this up in his chapter in the same document and acknowledged that the church had real difficulty in understanding the MSE role. He believed the focus on Kingdom theology to be the bridge for framing the MSEs' role in the world of work, and for conceptualising the role of NSMs whose focus was essentially parochial (pp 30-31). It is interesting to note that until that point, all church documents included some discussion about the nature of priesthood exercised by NSMs, and in particular whether it was ontologically complete and appropriate. This had overtones of earlier debates about the purity of ordained priesthood and its contamination by the world of work. Rayner[296] used much space in his part of the document to challenge the church to find grounds for not confirming the completeness of the priesthood of MSEs and the appropriateness of the role when the call to do God's work in its full incarnational framework is remembered. This emphasis on the completeness of the MSEs' priesthood marks something of a sea-change in tone and content from previous publications; it gave the sense of the role now being addressed in a more mature manner.

All the research reports quoted so far commented on how poor the different dioceses were at developing policy frameworks and associated documentation for NSMs and MSEs in particular. Four diocesan policy frameworks were collected in the course of the present research. They concern the dioceses of Southwell,[297] Bradford,[298] London,[299] and Ripon and Leeds.[300] They span the years 1994 to 2003, and all four documents focus primarily on deployment of NSMs and MSEs. Each document moves forward in different ways, but comes back to the challenge of making more ordained minsters available more cheaply and to be allocated at the discretion of the diocese rather than simply allowing non-stipendiary clergy to

[294] (Rayner, Ranken, & Woolcoombe 1989)
[295] (Rayner, Ranken, & Woolcoombe 1989;Rayner 1998)
[296] (Rayner, Ranken, & Woolcoombe 1989)
[297] (Harris 1994)
[298] (Lewis 1995)
[299] (Cunliffe 1999)
[300] (Keighley 2003)

remain in the ‘home’ parish. This is significant at several levels. It is notable that such an approach is strongly organisational, using the tools of management, finance and human resources to shape a workforce to respond to ‘demand’. Each diocese stated that in part at least, the document produced had been stimulated either by external or internal review of the available clergy. Interestingly, there is a ten-fold difference in the numbers of clergy concerned in the different dioceses. The Diocese of London had just over 1600 clergy at the time of publication of the report (1999), while the Diocese of Ripon and Leeds had one hundred and sixty. An obvious conclusion therefore is that numbers of extant clergy are not a guide to the numbers of clergy likely to be in post in the future. Workforce planning as it is broadly understood in the secular world has not been adopted in the Church of England, but the concerns that drive the creation of such plans are clearly visible in these reports. There is also a concern to make non-stipendiary clergy ‘accountable’. Implicit in this critique is that such clergy are ‘picking and choosing’ their ministry and are therefore not burdened with the day-to-day ministry in the same way that stipendiary clergy are. This criticism of ministerial ‘cherry-picking’ by MSEs in particular is an old chestnut; the archive reveals that it was aired as an early criticism about part-time ministers. The falsity of such assertions was exposed by Morgan when she was able to report that many non-stipendiary priests were devoting nearly the same number of hours weekly to their parish ministry as were stipendiary priests, but with the difference that the MSEs were also working in a job.[301] This throws an uncomfortable light on how non-stipendiary priests are perceived from the viewpoint of the diocesan office. MSE is seen as a development to be controlled and maximised, rather than as a ministry that requires an institutional rather than an organisational response.

While the Ripon and Leeds document[302] attempts to provide a historical background and a theological rationale for the development of MSE, the Bradford

[301] (Morgan 2010)
[302] (Keighley 2003)

document[303] is a collection of personal reflections used to try and illuminate the experience rather than coming to any policy conclusions. In contrast, the Southwark document [304]is data driven and makes explicit recommendations about contracts and utilisation of non-stipendiary ministers. The anomalous document is the report of the Diocese of London[305]. This reads as a product of a working group and makes many recommendations, as in similar documents. However, it does not refer to the detailed study undertaken as part of the project to produce the report. The study and the associated completed questionnaire returns had languished in a worker priest's office until hearing of this present study being undertaken, when she handed them to me. The London Diocese study had tried to identify all the NSMs in each of the Diocesan Areas and elicited a great deal of information, none of which is overtly drawn on in the final report. There is a sense of the left and right hand not being aware of the other's work at diocesan level. The papers relating to the study have proved to be a treasure trove of background documents privately circulated between MSEs, in particular in the period leading up to the report. The London Diocesan study illuminates the disjunction between policy development and intended outcomes in an essentially authoritarian institution where the 'Father in God' (Bishop) retains the sense that his role includes making decisions about what 'his' clergy will do. None of the four diocesan documents explore in any depth the notion that in a God-led organisation, NSMs and MSEs may be an emanation of the Holy Spirit's will and is therefore to be responded to from the base of the practice of such people. Rather, the development is seen as an opportunity to prop up an institution in its traditional shape and expectations: another example of the church operating homeostatically.

6.3 Some Statistics

In the arena of self-supporting ministry and MSE in particular, determining numbers is an emerging science. The 2013 report from the Church of England

[303] (Lewis 1995)
[304] (Harris 1994)
[305] (Cunliffe 1999)

statistics department[306] lays out a series of caveats before providing what are increasingly robust numbers for consideration in comparison with historical figures. The exclusions from the analysis are important to note as a number of the excluded groups could be seen as MSEs in function; they include:

> *Clergy who work outside of the clergy share system are not counted in the main tables. These include clergy whose responsibilities are national and those whose stipend is locally funded, self supporting ministers not counted elsewhere, ordained members of religious communities, ordained Church Army and ordained staff of theological/bible colleges.* (Statistics Unit p. 6)[307]

The statisticians are also presented with other challenges, including the presence of the Diocese of Europe and the clergy in Europe who by and large come from the UK and therefore move in and out of the national data-base. There is lack of data about the age of all clergy (p.13)[308] and confusion arises because of lack of standardisation of nomenclature applied across all forms of NSMs. Another challenge not addressed in the document but experienced by myself when Dean of NSMs, is the issue of ensuring that all NSMs are licensed as their ministry means that they can have links with parishes in more than one diocese; some being multiply licensed and some holding no license at all. The multiply licensed MSEs run the risk of appearing in the statistics multiple times as licensed in different dioceses. Having acknowledged this, there are also some significant changes identified in the data bases to reflect on.

The focus of the analysis by the Statistical Department is two-fold: to identify the changes in stipendiary clergy numbers entering and exiting their life's work; and to generate data to underpin decisions about the number of future training places. The document heads its first chart with the information that in 2012, 'Almost two-thirds (65%) of licensed ministers do not receive any stipend' (p. 7).[309] This total consists of active retired ordained clergy, which makes up 20% of the total, NSMs comprise 11%, and readers (licensed and retired with permission to officiate),

[306] (Statistics Unit 2013)
[307] (Statistics Unit 2013)
[308] (Statistics Unit 2013)
[309] (Statistics Unit 2013)

which comprise 33%. More importantly, the report reflects the focus of the analysis and therefore the requirements of decision-makers in the Church of England, which is to know if someone is receiving income for their role or not. Parochial stipendiary clergy comprise only 27% of the total number of licensed ministers. Played down in this data, but significant in other ways, is the presence in that number of senior non-parish attached clergy. They make up 8% of that total, meaning that the actual numbers of clergy whose stipendiary duty is parish work, is even lower than at first appears. It would be possible to see these senior clergy as MSEs, i.e. engaged in activities not directly associated with the day-to-day pastoral and ministerial work. The focus on parish ministry also reveals that 30% of all parish clergy are NSMs. This points to the difficulty of the analysis, because it is not clear how many of these clergy see their primary calling as supportive parish ministers or MSEs who are parish attached and parish engaged. From this data one concludes that the focus on providing parish priests is skewing both the data collection and the analysis and therefore obscuring the rich diversity of ministries that exist in the Church of England.

Another data set is introduced with the words:

> *The number of full-time parochial clergy has decreased by 15% while the number of self-supporting clergy has risen by 50% over the last decade.* (Statistics Unit p. 8)[310]

The map associated with this statistic, however, shows remarkable diocesan differences in this figure quoted, with nine dioceses reporting up to 41% of clergy as self-supporting and twelve reporting it to be as low as 13%. The other dioceses range between these two figures. In the decade 2002-12 the total number of clergy available in the dioceses of England when retired licensed clergy are excluded, has fallen by only 147. However this points to a trend that is not being successfully addressed by the current training numbers. Despite over 500 people a year being ordained during the period in question, the age profile means that more people are retiring than are being ordained. A similar map on page 9 of the report[311] shows

[310] (Statistics Unit 2013)
[311] (Statistics Unit 2013)

marked diversity between dioceses when the ratio of stipendiary clergy to population is described. It is not possible to correlate the distribution of stipendiary and NSMs from these maps, but it is possible to identify individual dioceses where the high level of stipendiary clergy relates to a very low level of NSMs (Chelmsford and London, for example) and dioceses where a low level of stipendiary clergy relates to a high level of NSMs (Hereford and Salisbury). This suggests that there is a pattern of decision-making that is actively pursuing certain ministerial ends in terms of provision, perhaps pointing to different approaches to mission activity.

Looking at the age distribution more closely:

> *Self-supporting diocesan clergy were older, on average, than stipendiary clergy (both full and part-time).* (Statistics Unit 2013 p. 13)[312]

A pattern begins to emerge with NSM being associated with a calling that emerges later in life, with only 53 MSEs under the age of 40, representing about 3% of the total. Despite these changes, 'Male stipendiary clergy account for over half of all diocesan clergy' (p.14),[313] which points to the slow change in the gender balance among stipendiary clergy, but perhaps of greater significance from the perspective of this study, the figure has fallen from 67% in 2002 to 52% in 2012. It is noteworthy that the gender balance between male and female NSMs is almost equal, though women exceeded men in 2012. The percentage of women NSMs has doubled in that period and while it is clear that stipendiary women clergy have increased by 5% in the decade, it is the NSMs that in numerical terms make up the balance at diocesan level.

The overall picture is one of progressive change with the numbers of stipendiary clergy falling, but not equally across England, and the numbers of NSMs rising. The later age of onset of NSM ministry has yet to be fully explored in terms of duration, with compulsory retirement set at 70 years of age. Like all retirement arrangements, this will no doubt be revisited over time. However, as parishes

[312] (Statistics Unit 2013)
[313] (Statistics Unit 2013)

increasingly depend on retired clergy (as a numeric proportion) who are re-licensed after retirement, the proportion of NSMs in active retirement could well increase. Given the purpose of these data sets, gleaning information about NSMs is limited to narrow insights into their particular approaches to ministry. The collection of data about MSEs as a subset of NSMs, is currently very limited and not routinely held at a central level. Some dioceses have done one-off surveys from time to time, but as Deans of NSMs have observed that the individual diocesan figures can soon duplicate as the individuals are counted in their diocese of residence and diocese of occupation. Fiona Stewart-Darling has observed (in private communication) that as Bishop's Chaplain to Canary Wharf, she is working with MSEs from thirty or more dioceses in England and with Anglican clergy licensed also in other countries. While Canary Wharf may be exceptional for its diversity of staffing and density of work places, it is certainly an example of how working patterns are developing with significant commuting and remote working. It is possible to conclude from reviewing the only available data bases, that NSM ministry is statistically hidden, and MSE ministry even more so.

6.4 Ecclesiological implications

As indicated in chapter 1, 3 and 5, this study of MSEs is being used as a prism to illuminate something about the nature of the church's ecclesiology. The study of ecclesiology has a long history with both Nicholas Healy[314] and Paul Fiddes[315] tracing the subject back to Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and his examination of the spiritual experience.[316,317] Other authors who have addressed ecclesiology, and all from different perspectives, include Avery Dulles,[318] James Hopewell,[319] Martyn Percy[320] and Pete Ward.[321] Fiddes makes two helpful points about the modern understanding of what ecclesiology has become: first, that:

[314] (Healy 2000)
[315] (Fiddes 2012)
[316] (Schleiermacher 1996)
[317] (Schleiermacher 1958)
[318] (Dulles 1988)
[319] (Hopewell 1987)
[320] (Percy 2005)
[321] (Ward 2013)

> *Ecclesiology, as employed by theologians, is deeply rooted in a doctrine of the triune God, and so seems to take its sources 'deductively' from the Holy Scriptures, the traditions of the church, and its liturgy.* (Fiddes 2012 p. 13)[322]

And:

> *A second point about method in ecclesiology is that, in comparison with a merely scientific or sociological perspective on community, it will look for something unexpected in the area of 'theory' - that is, proposing how and why events happen as they do.* (Fiddes 2012 p. 33)[323]

These perspectives on ecclesiology place the researcher in the stance of someone who has to reflect on the institutional church in terms of doctrine, scripture and liturgy and to be prepared, in similar ways to grounded theory practice, to identify the anomalies arising from the decision-making and practices of the church, given its established beliefs and teachings. This is why examining the experience of MSE becomes such a valuable activity. The anomalies described in terms of practice, position and expectation all suggest something illogical and unbalanced about the organisation within which MSE is happening. The rebuttal is that it might be 'typical' of the institution, and that it only remains anomalous because it has yet to be 'received' and agreed upon. In other words, the church may be engaging in means of operation that have not been formally agreed, but that have come to be expected as part of its life as an institution, while the means of operation await formal reception as characteristic of that body.

Fiddes[324] refers to drawing on the three foundation stones of the church: doctrine, scripture and liturgy. While for some branches of Christian worship these three items are immutable, in reality, the understanding of all three has changed to various degrees from the very beginning of church history. The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 15, identified a conclave in Jerusalem about CE50 to resolve differences of understanding between the leaders of the church on matters concerning membership and the practices of Hellenised Christians. Accepting therefore an on-going fluidity in church doctrine, understanding of scripture and

[322] (Fiddes 2012)
[323] (Fiddes 2012)
[324] (Fiddes 2012)

liturgical practice, the justification for ecclesiology becomes evident. However, which is the best ecclesiological approach to adopt in these circumstances is not clear. Fiddes points to the doctrine of the triune God as being central to understanding the ecclesiology adopted. God as Trinity is a complex piece of Christian teaching concerning the nature of the relationship of three persons in the one God. This suggests therefore that community (three persons) and one God (one body, but not limited corporeally) are important metaphors for explaining Christian thought. Indeed, the church is often referred to as the mystical body of Christ on earth after the ascension of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Paul first expressed this notion to the Corinthians, explaining that 'You are the Body of Christ and individually members of it' (1 Cor. 12.27).[325] This makes concepts of body central to understanding the nature of church. The beliefs about body in church literature are wide and varied and another way might helpfully be adopted to explore what the body looks like from the point of view of MSEs. That is why the actual working of the human body can be illuminative of ecclesiology.

The human body is an immensely complex organism (not unlike the church) and scientists continue to investigate how it works. Two components of the physical operation of the body seem to parallel the operating of the Church of England: the reflex arc and homeostasis. Both are elements of the body's operation that occur without conscious involvement of the individual, though parts of human consciousness can influence how they work. Almost everyone has experienced a doctor examining their reflexes and in particular the patellar reflex in the knee. As the doctor taps the knee just below the knee cap (patella) the leg swings forward without the voluntary control of the individual. This tells a doctor a great deal about the health of the nerves and muscles, but the patient has not done anything consciously about it. The same applies to homeostasis, which is a physical phenomenon achieved mainly by the liaison of the autonomic nervous system and the body's hormones working together to achieve the correct response to changes in the internal and external environment of the body. This might be as simple as

[325] (Paul. 2003)

‘goose bumps’ as the hairs on the body erect to trap and warm the air when the individual suddenly feels cold, or the release of adrenalin when the individual is frightened or engaged in significant physical activity. The mechanisms for controlling these responses lie deep in the base of the brain and along with other mechanisms, such as the control of breathing and the pulse rate, are rarely part of the individual’s consciousness.

The key issue is that both the reflex arc and homeostasis (achieving optimum level of balance) occur without the body needing to summon them in any way. Their absence can quickly prove fatal if the body does not react in a way that sustains life. It is possible therefore that the church’s engagement with MSE can be perceived as its reflex and homeostatic functions. When asked to consider the development of MSE as a possibility in the nineteenth century, the Church of England reacted reflexively and decided against it. When the church could no longer ignore it because of developments in other provinces, a homeostatic response was elicited that enabled institutional adaption to, and even adoption of MSE, without changing any great public principles of ordained ministry. Both of these reactions mimic physiological responses and reflect a theological notion posited by Healy, that:

> *A number of theologians have noted how this doctrine [of the Trinity] requires us to keep shifting our perspective so that we view a theological locus like the doctrine of the church in relation to one and then another person of the Trinity, as well as the Trinity as such.* (Healy 2000 p. 34)[326]

This reads like a homeostatic response. As a body receives stimuli from different sensory points, so it seeks to understand the significance of it by monitoring, through the pituitary gland, the level of circulating hormones and releasing messages by ‘stimulating’ hormones that enable new physiological responses to be adopted. From this perspective, MSE has been adopted by the church and integrated into the body by being enabled to form its own societies to sustain itself, by having deans appointed to regulate MSEs and by having specific training

[326] (Healy 2000)

offered to enable MSEs to participate in the life of the church, principally the parish life of the church. The perspective of the church seems to change regularly from time to time and from place to place. The statistics reveal radical diversity of approaches across the dioceses of England, which suggests that local leadership feels no imperative to come to a united or perhaps more explicitly organisational decision about the utilisation of this vocation. This seems to indicate that theologically, MSE is still in a state of 'reception' in the institution. Homeostatically, the church has found a way of utilising the ministry according to the needs of the church (shortage of parish priests) but has not been able to explore the potential of the calling of MSEs in the church's wider mission.

This state of suspended animation, perhaps more correctly described as part animation, suggests that MSEs might see the church rather differently than the church sees itself. Homeostatic responses can be gradual and unobserved and most MSEs whose records are in the archive point to a warm reception in the parish when helping with parish work, and in the work place when individuals need pastoral support or information about how to access a church for particular services. However, an institution-wide appraisal of the potential of the role and how this might be determined in the modern church has not taken place. Ward has described the emergence of 'new expressions'[327] as evidence of how the church can change. However, from an MSE perspective, this is an extension of parish-type church life and hence it is useful to consider the implications of how the church looks when considered from the MSE perspective. In the period covered in this study (1960-2000), there has been a profound transformation of the world of work. Above all else perhaps was the impact that IT had on the world of work. Castells wrote in 1996:

> *... the dilemma of technological determinism is probably a false problem, since technology is society, and society cannot be understood or represented without its technological tools.* (Castells 1996 p. 5) [328]

[327] (Ward 2002)
[328] (Castells 1996)

Gone is the age of mainly manual work, nearly everything requires IT to some degree and with it has gone the massive workforces of mining and the steel industry, to be replaced by highly mechanised work processes, perhaps best represented by the films of production lines showing that from end to end no human hand touches the object that will roll off the line as a car. This is the world of MSEs, one in which technology is dominant, and employees require IT skills almost above all else.

From this perspective the church can look quite strange to an MSE. In order to make these changes, the world of work had adopted not just the new technology but has become what is described as 'evidence-based' or at least, evidence informed. However, the church has yet to develop the informational basis it needs to interface effectively with this changed world. Procedures and protocols, business plans and time management are central to how most MSEs work, but for many parish priests they get in the way of the 'real' work. Yet what is 'real' work? Forder described the work in 1959, in the revised edition of his book, giving a very detailed account of the expectations of pastoral work and the running of a parish. The second sentence of the first chapter bewailed that:

> *In spite of the necessity for order, there is a deplorable lack of business efficiency among the clergy as a whole.* (Forder 1959 p. 3)[329]

This set the tone of the next half century for the complaints that the role of the parish priest has become ever more like that of a junior manager. Greenwood, writing in 1994, reflected that:

> *One of the results [of the apostolic foundational myth] was to hasten the movement towards a marginalized Church in which clergy confined themselves to so-called 'spiritual' over against 'secular' matters. The emphasis on the divinely commissioned separateness of the priest coincided with a decline in the public status of clergy and indeed, a continual decline in membership and in the influence of the whole Church in the networks of community and national life.* (Greenwood 1994 p. 31)[330]

[329] (Forder 1947)
[330] (Greenwood 1994)

The ‘real’ work has become defined as ‘spiritual’ in contrast to ‘secular’. While Greenwood might be criticised for over-generalising to a degree, the reflections from MSEs would uphold this as a valid insight. Without debating the absolutes, it seems fair to assume that it illuminates one of the key differences between parish priests and their MSE colleague. Parish priests are perhaps seeing themselves as called to a spiritual ministry, while the MSEs see themselves called to a priestly ministry in the midst of the world of work: the actual secular world where the parish priest might well feel most uncomfortable.

In asking how MSEs see the church, it is unfair to assert that parish priests see themselves as dealing with the spiritual and MSEs with the secular part of life. However, this underlines a difference in calling and subsequent priestly training. In the late 1970s, when Greenwood was serving in a highly urbanised parish in Leeds, he wrote:

> *In order to get to know people better, to affirm the importance of their job and to understand a city life completely foreign to me as a countryman, I spent some time going with members of the congregation to their place of work.* (Greenwood 1970 p. 22) [331]

Greenwood went on to describe that going to the place of their work with members of the congregation was an enlightening experience and how it led him to realise that even in roles not highly valued by society (school dinner lady in charge at a large school) a parishioner would have more than enough organisational skills to run a Parish Church Council. His critique of the church was quite explicit: the organisation of the church did not comprehend the world of work and therefore had not shaped itself to integrate with it or provided ministry to meet its needs. He wrote almost with shock that:

> *... I recognize how difficult I found it to hear some church members say firmly that their daily work required all their thought and energy and involvement.* (Greenwood 1988 p. 135)[332]

[331] (Greenwood 1988)
[332] (Greenwood 1988)

This reflects the MSE insight that a parish priest often has no idea how exhausting the life of work is and accidentally not only reveals this ignorance, but compounds it by revealing a life-style that to many in the world of work appears restful and physically or interpersonally undemanding. This would not be the way in which many parish priests would describe their roles as they look at parish life with all the challenges it presents. However, when trying to illustrate the MSE perspective, such differences are crucial. In his later text Greenwood took the point forward:

> *The Church should offer structures that enable the laity to share with others the problems and achievements of their working or community life. The focus of such dialogue should be the question, 'If this is God's vision for the present and future of his universe, what contribution can I make given my circumstances and gifts?' A similar process should be taking place regarding the role of the local church in the community and the institutional church in a global society. The presiding non-stipendiary priest should have a particularly strong contribution to make in this area. A stipendiary priest may be wise to encourage others to lead in this aspect of the community's life.* (Greenwood 1994 p. 171)[333]

An approach such as Greenwood describes would make a difference as it reflects supporting Christians in the workplace and basing mission around their occupation, rather than focusing on recruiting people to come to church. This would reflect better the application of the words used to discharge Anglicans at the end of the Communion service, ‘Go in peace to love and serve the Lord’, which reflects the active side of mission in going out to ‘serve’. The alternative words, ‘Go in the peace of Christ’ suggest no such action, but rather resting back on divine grace. Such differences indicate why MSEs would find much in the church a paradoxical experience when seen from the active life of the world of work.

The difference in perspective between an MSE and a parish priest is also captured in an assessment of how social culture and mores have changed between 1960 and 2000. In Marwick’s sixteen characteristics of how culture changed in the 1960s (see Chapter 5) there is emphasis on how individualism came to the fore. Britain had started the 1960s with a high regard for hierarchy and institutions; by the end of the decade, this deference had gone and has not returned. MSEs are

[333] (Greenwood 1994)

an integral part of that change as the first major training programmes started in that decade. The cultural move was from a spatial foundation for society to one founded on communication, not even requiring two individuals to be in touch to communicate. Castells explained:

> *The fundamental fact is that social meaning evaporates from places, and therefore from society, and becomes diluted and diffused in the reconstructed logic of a space of flows whose profile, origin, and ultimate purpose are unknown, even for many of the entities integrated in the network of exchanges. The flows of power generate the power of flows, whose material reality imposes itself as a natural phenomenon that cannot be controlled or predicted, only accepted and managed. This is the real significance of the current restructuring process, implemented on the basis of new information technologies, and materially expressed in the separation between functional flows and historically determined places as two disjointed spheres of the human experience. People live in places, power rules through flows.* (Castells 1989 p. 349)[334]

Society has moved from being spatially bound to relating through the flows of communication, which are not even limited by time differences. This is not how the institution of the church can be described. The church is still geographically determined with significant buildings as its focal point. While MSEs were part of the change process, other significant things were happening in terms of church history, including the fall in the number of people going to church to worship. As Steve Bruce succinctly put it, relating the diminishing numbers to an increased sense of individuation:

> *The bottom line is this: individualism, diversity and egalitarianism in the context of liberal democracy undermine the authority of religious belief.* (Bruce 2002 p. 30)[335]

The rise in the charismatic movement can be traced to the 1960s,[336] as the point where charismatic practices transferred from the Pentecostal tradition into mainstream church practice. This too, emphasised the individual's experience of God rather than community worship. Eventually, the 1960s saw the gradual demise of Industrial Mission as charted by Wickham.[337,338] Wickham's critique on

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[334] (Castells 1989)
[335] (Bruce 2002)
[336] (Hastings, Mason, Pyper, Lawrie, & Bennett 2000)
[337] (Wickham 1957)
[338] (Wickham 1998)

the lack of responsiveness of the organisation of the church to Industrial Mission rings bells about MSE, despite acknowledging the need for organisation and integration of the different components of the church to make Industrial Mission effective. Wickham identified the lack of this integration as one of the key reasons for the eventual failure of industrial mission. MSEs see the same phenomenon when they are welcomed but not supported with structure and organisational process. Culturally and from the perspective of the changes initiated in the 1960s, the question arises if MSE is where the church would both like and need to go but is not appropriately organised to get there. It could be argued that such a move would generate a response to the way in which individual character is formed and how established social values have changed. It could be read that the 1960s were a culturally inspired opportunity for the church that was turned into a crisis by focusing on falling rolls rather than exploring the potential of the new developments. In physiological terms, the church responded homeostatically. The church did what caused least fluctuations in the body by absorbing the 'new' form of ministry, encouraging it to be almost identical to the selection and training of parish clergy, and then trying to focus it as far as possible on parish ministry. The radical nature of the changes in society were not related enough to the radical nature of this new ministry.

6.5. Conclusions

Ranken led the charge for recognition of his ministry in secular employment and his own archive now rests at the Royal Foundation of St Katherine's in the Docklands of the East End of London. MSEs like Ranken have often commented on the peculiarity of the church when considered from the perspective of ordained ministry. In Ranken's archive is a document entitled *Towards the Conversion of England* in 1945. It includes the following statement:

> *England will never be converted until the laity use the opportunities for evangelism afforded by their various professions, crafts and occupations.* (Archbishops' Commission on Evangelism 1945 p.150)[339]

[339] (Archbishops' Commission on Evangelism. 1945)

This report was the clarion call for the first generation of worker priests to give up their parishes and go to work in factories. In the same timescale the industrial mission came to fruition and chaplaincies in various organisations began to multiply. The MSEs were there at the turning point of the changing world of work and began their exploration of what was possible. Despite more than half a century of activity, the problems of clerical identity still belabour their work and understanding of their capacity. It is important to note that it is not a natural expectation to go to work to visit a priest. Historically, the priest was seen in the local church or chapel, the vicarage or equivalent building set aside for such purposes, or in an individual's own home. However, as society has moved from being home-based to activity-based, the likelihood of meeting a priest in the workplace is increasingly possible and found to be appropriate. This is a positive change, the church having facilitated the role of MSEs and the range of NSMs in general. It is not clear, however, if the church has realised that this is what it has done. Is this an example of the unconscious homeostatic reaction that stabilised a challenging situation in the 1950s, having unforeseen outcomes from the 1980s onwards?

The increased likelihood of meeting a priest in the workplace produces a number of paradoxical images to consider. First, if the parish priest is the father (this was the traditional honorary title, still used in some parishes) to the community with rights of incumbency and decision-making, can MSE be seen (working stereotypically) as the mother of their community? Using the stereotype, are MSEs working in a more subservient role and yet shaping and influencing thinking and actions profoundly, but on a level that parish priests find hard to engage with? Another image would be that of MSEs representing a spatially bound organisation in a non-spatial setting where communication is the key function, but not reflecting the license that they hold that links them to a particular parochial setting. A final image might be of MSEs as the representatives of the sacred in a secular setting where what is holy is not a doctrinally identified sacrament, but expressed in the

honesty with which people work, the principles that they follow and the self-sacrifices they make to support each other, demonstrating an incarnational imperative. These images project a sense of the paradox and contradiction associated with MSEs who have been authorised and trained by a church that lacks in a track record of ministering in such places and thereby reaching out to people who do not know of it or support its followers in their daily work.

In her seminal work *The Human Condition* Hannah Arendt made two statements in her opening arguments, which in 1958 were unarguably linked by the internal logic that she was following. The first was:

> *Men in the plural, that is, men in so far as they live and act in this world, can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and to themselves.* (Arendt 1958 p. 4)[340]

Writing forty years later, Castells would have no problems with that assertion. However, the second of Arendt's arguments demonstrates how quickly things changed:

> *Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor. The human condition of labor is life itself.* (Arendt 1958 p. 7)[341]

Castells[342] would argue that it is not possible any longer to separate communication and labour; indeed, they are synonymous. With the breaking down of that distinction has gone the dependence on the labourer by the master, and vice versa. Instead, it is by communication that individuals both survive and recognise others and themselves. The dependence has dissolved and resulted in a life of individual choices. This interdependence and paradoxical individualism generated through communication cannot be said to be true of the foundational links of parochial life where the spatial tie requires distinctions, hierarchies and work arrangements that do not reflect the experience most people have in other

[340] (Arendt 1958)
[341] (Arendt 1958)
[342] (Castells 1996)

fields of their life. That such notions arise from the world of work, which itself has become a much more dominant phenomenon in social life between 1960 and 2000, leads to speculation that MSEs are the way that the church has chosen to communicate with that world of work without necessarily adopting the modes of operation so widely used in the world of secular activity or even consciously identifying MSE as the mode of mission to be followed. The homeostatic adaption of MSE by the institution provides continuity, but does not maximize the capacity implicit in the development.

To summarise, perhaps a stronger line of analysis is that the MSE role is perceived to have started in an incidental manner under the pressure of other changes already enacted in other provinces of the Anglican Church. To manage this, the church did as little as it needed to do to enable the experiment to commence without setting in place any structures to evaluate its impact or future potential. Almost by accident therefore (some would say through the work of the Holy Spirit), the MSEs' role has developed as the answer to the church's lack of a formalised response to the individuated society where self-choice and personal decision-making are key to the way in which life is lived. Existing very much on their own and away from a physical church base, MSEs have paralleled the developments in society while not being sucked into the institution to support the short-falls that the church is experiencing in the provision of parish priests. It is logical to conclude that this development offers the church very significant possibilities as church, in the understanding of priesthood and in reconsidering what the nature of parish might be. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Ecclesiological issues emerging from the analysis

> *Within such a movement, ... priests, including priests who have gone into secular employment, could find a place but in such a way that the isolated issue of the priest as such in secular employment was subdued, kept in its minor place appropriate to a 'reformed' ecclesiology, contained in the much larger concept of a Christian movement dispersed into the world with a 'missionary' commitment. But though contained and subdued, his role could be a valuable one. It is this we should be about, not priests in secular employment as a separate issue.* (Wickham 1998 pp 211-12)[343]

7.1 Introduction

Wickham had done a great deal to develop and sustain industrial mission from its base in Sheffield. Not surprisingly, he became an insightful critic of MSE and the church's response, or lack of it, to this development. He saw the need for a reformed ecclesiology that reflected the church as it transformed itself in the post-war period. As observed:

> *It should be noted that though the number of clergy and ministers in secular jobs increases, few become genuine worker-priests, manual workers, engineers and factory workers.* (Wickham 1998 p. 208)[344]

Wickham's argument was that the degree of cultural change was such that even the term 'work' had changed its meaning. He was right; the nature of employment had shifted significantly during the 1980s and 1990s as the UK changed from being a manufacturing-led country to one whose principal income came from the service industries. Wickham had seen the legitimation of the MSE role as a new form of mission in the church and was concerned that without it there would be an increasing sense of frustration among MSEs. This tallies with Vaughan's[345] concerns about the degree of cognitive dissonance experienced by MSEs whose reading of scripture and tradition led them to see their own roles as ecclesiologically mainstream. This perception of MSE as being in the mainstream

[343] (Wickham 1998)
[344] (Wickham 1998)
[345] (Vaughan 1986)

of church life was not generally shared by the parochial clergy with whom they laboured or the institution of the church in which they were licensed. In the initial analysis of the archive three themes became evident as concerning MSEs and the ecclesiology in which they found themselves operating: church, priesthood and parish. Behind these themes lay the more significant construct of community, and Theo Hobson (p. 49)[346] agreed with Wickham that the overriding theme in church thinking had become community, both the geographical locale as well as the church's own community, the laity. This style of thinking proved a barrier to proper evaluation of MSE in the wider church and community life.

In evaluating the archive used in this study it became clear that many of the participants saw themselves as alone, not in a specific community, trying to work out theologically the implications of the situations in which they found themselves and the challenges presented to them. They had no centrally agreed thesis applied top down to work to; rather, they were or are engaged in theological analysis, speculation and testing, and trying to do theology bottom-up. Such analysis and reflection adopted by MSEs challenges any assertion that theology is primarily an academic pursuit and not one that requires faith commitment. This is contextual theology, process theology and applied theology combined, and theology in the raw as individuals of great faith seek to determine what the work of God is in their situation. Brown bemoaned the lack of focus on suburbia in the use of contextual theology techniques.[347] It is in suburbia that much of MSE theologising occurs, not in parish churches or remote workplaces, but in the quiet reflection and active application in offices and homes, classrooms and buses, and anywhere that MSEs might find themselves. This is why Castells[348,349] is an invaluable companion. He showed insight into how cities and suburbs evolved and came to shape how life is lived, the constraints under which people operate and the new expectations that have come to determine what is seen to be an

[346] (Hobson 2004)
[347] (Brown 2005)
[348] (Castells 1989)
[349] (Castells 1996)

appropriate life-style. It is central to the MSEs' role that they act as theologians in these settings.

MSEs see themselves as challenging the prevailing ecclesiology because how they exist in their roles calls into question many of the assumptions that parish-based clergy and indeed parishioners in general make of the role of clergy. . MSEs are detached from the parish unless actually engaged in ministry there; they do not have an ecclesial community around them, but one that is drawn together by the needs of work. They are working for a living and not receiving a stipend. They see themselves as full-time priests but are more usually described as part-time priests. These differences point to a form of priestly life that is more dissimilar than similar to the parish priest, and more similar to the life of the laity rather than the clergy. This places MSEs in a framework that is comparatively unstructured in church terms, but highly structured in terms of occupation and social expectations. The structure is extraordinarily busy and requiring a great deal of skilled planning to meet the expectations of all parties and demands the ability to read across different cultures and to interpret the cultures from more than one perspective. These are the ecclesiological challenges being faced and struggled with by MSEs. The conundrum is why this role was created as a presence in the life of the church and yet elicits such a diversity of responses. Discussion of the findings and context will help to elucidate some of this and place the role in clearer ecclesiological contexts.

7.2. The Church

The church has a long history of Christianising social developments. Keith Thomas addressed this in some detail in his description of how the church assimilated pagan practices and substituted them with Christianised blessings and roles. His observation was that:

> *This well-known process of assimilation was not achieved without some cost, for it meant that many of the purposes served by the older paganism were now looked for from nominally Christian institutions.* (Thomas 1971 p. 54)[350]

Many people saw engaging in paid work to be a diminution of the holiness of the ordained priestly role, where holiness was demonstrated by the absence of paid work and dependence on the generosity of God, reflected in the support of the believers. The challenge caused by MSEs needed legislation to change the permissions given to ordained ministers to be employed and follow a career, thus publicly redefining the nature of ordained priesthood. The key issue was that MSEs did not need stipends and therefore were undermining the development of parochial ministry of the previous two centuries. The system of stipends was to relieve the individual of the concern for earning a living and was therefore a necessary perquisite for fulfilling the priestly role. The relationship between adopted penury and holiness was also challenged. The response to MSE reveals the church having to find ways to assimilate practice, but also having to pay a cost, yet not one that required money. Thomas goes on to suggest about the church's practice in such settings:

> *The consolations afforded by such practices were too considerable for the Church to ignore; if the people were going to resort to magic anyway it was far better that it should be magic over which the church maintained some control.* (Thomas 1971 p. 55)[351]

Thus the 'magic' of MSE was legitimated and licensed in order to be assimilated into diocesan life in a manner that was commensurate with other forms of licensing and legitimation at diocesan and parish level. Control was sought over this new form of ministry as part of the structure available to support the life of the parish. The cost of the assimilation was for bishops to develop new patterns of oversight, which some did through the creation of deans of MSEs, or through ministerial development reviews. Formal structural change or policy redirection, however, did not happen. As these changes had to some degree been forced on the Church of England because of similar developments in other provinces of the Anglican Communion, the internal history of the development of MSE was not widely

[350] (Thomas 1971)
[351] (Thomas 1971)

understood or indeed known about in the English church. A small number of senior clergy had espoused the development and indeed subsequently pursued changes without there being a church-wide approach agreed; each diocese made its own decisions and provisions. Robert Reiss,[352] in reviewing the development of the assessment process for choosing candidates for training, made no mention of more focused criteria being used for MSEs. However, in 1983 Hodge had pointed out the difficulty in getting assessors to agree on recommending NSMs of any form:

> *Central selection for non-stipendiary ministry has been beset with understandable difficulties. The ministry is still a relatively new development in the Church of England, and has taken multifarious forms not yet fully understood. Among Church members there are wide varieties of opinion concerning the form it should take and indeed, whether it should exist at all.* (Hodge 1983b pp 33-4)[353]

In a different publication that same year and reproduced by Francis and Francis, Hodge wrote:

> *The first issue concerns selection. Selection for local non-stipendiary ministry emphasises the 'ecclesiastical call', 'the call from the church', the 'election' by parishes of men to be their own ordained ministers. ... Now, the sense of the 'ecclesiastical' as opposed to the 'personal' call is undoubtedly less pronounced in the selection of candidates for ordinary non-stipendiary ministry.* (Hodge 1983a pp 9-11)[354]

In these quotations is the first significant indicator that the non-stipendiary ministry in general and one of its forms in particular (Local Non-Stipendiary Ministry - LNSM) raised significant ecclesiological questions when being considered for priestly training. LNSM relates to MSE in the very strong relationship between ordained ministry, shared ministry and the continuing presence in the workplace despite being an ordained minister. The Advisory Board of Ministry report *Stranger in the Wings*[355] draws attention to workplace ministry in two places. The first instance considers the question of vocations:

> *"3.4 We must be careful, when we reflect on the vocation shared by all baptized members of Christ, that we do not interpret that vocation in a narrow and churchilly-introverted way.*

[352] (Reiss 2013)
[353] (Hodge 1983b)
[354] (Hodge 1983a)
[355] (Advisory Board of Ministry 1998)

The report All are Called (Board of Education, 1985) spoke of that call that 'comes to us all, for all of our days and years, and for all our activities' (p.3), and stressed that the call embraces ministries which are exercised in a church setting, ministries among family and friends. our 'Monday morning' ministries (i.e. within our secular occupations and involvements), our 'Saturday night' ministries (our leisure, sports, consumer activities). Too often, our developments in shared ministry have been narrow in interest, introverted and exclusive. Very often there has been a fundamental failure to engage with the real issues of peoples' lives, to support lay people in all layers and contexts of their lives. If the development of collaborative ministry fosters a narrow 'churchiness' then it is failing God and his people. We must be vigilant about this, because we know well that the true challenge and the true opportunity of collaboration is to foster a sense of corporate responsibility in our discipleship which will build up Christian communities which are able to support and release people to live out their vocation in all aspects of their lives." [pp.27-8]

It raises the same concern as Hodge above about the way that vocations are separated out the failure in the church to see how multiple vocations can be, and are, exercised together. Perhaps even more importantly it is critical of a church that does not encourage people to develop themselves in a more multi-faceted way. The report goes on to identify the implications of this for church life:

"3.21 As we have seen earlier in this chapter, all Christians are called to live out the gospel in every aspect of their daily lives. LNSMs, by virtue of their non-stipendiary ordained ministry, share with lay Christians the task of Christian witness not just in the local community but in the world of work. It would be quite wrong to assume that it is only NSMs in the broader category who are well placed to explore the pressures, opportunities and ethical questions that arise in the workplace, whereas LNSMs are people concerned more narrowly with the gathered Christian community. On the contrary, LNSMs will be well placed, within the local church, to share with others in reflecting upon how people are to be supported in their wider lives and how best the local church may give proper space and attention to such issues." [pp.34-5]

The authors make clear that LNSMs and NSMs share the same opportunity to live out their lives in the world of work while serving their local churches as ordained ministers. As MSEs have identified in particular, there is the opportunity for all ministers in these categories to focus on enabling the church to respond more actively and in a more informed manner on the challenge of being a committed Christian and engaged in the work place.

The question of what criteria are used in selection for ordination training therefore becomes of real interest. As a group, NSMs were seen to come forward for consideration for training using different criteria to parochial clergy. The basis for recommendation to a bishop that the individual should be trained for ordination therefore rests on a different set of assumptions in the selection process. Both Reiss[356] and Hodge[357] described the sensitivity of the relationship between the status of the assessment conferences and weight given to the bishops' decision. It was ultimately a bishop's decision who should be ordained, but from 1913 onwards the church had instituted committees and procedures to support, and to a degree oversee, the process of selection. As this new group of potential clergy manifested itself from the 1960s onwards, the boundaries between the different degrees of authority in this process were tested. The issue was one of logic in that the stipendiary priests were ordained with at least the theoretical possibility of serving anywhere in the church. With NSMs, and indeed anyone working for a living, it was anticipated that they would be limited to the geography that they currently occupied. This was to change radically in the closing decades of the twentieth century as the nature of work changed. However, the church was slow to see this coming and was still engaged in 'turf wars' in terms of how to authorise the selection and subsequent training of NSMs, and MSEs in particular. The subsequent publication about NSM ministry does not engage in debate about these aspects of selection and training;[358] on the contrary, it was a report on the experiences of local NSMs with practical guidance about their management. A quirky but illuminating aspect is events surrounding the publication of *Ordained Local Ministry*.[359] The publication focused on the development of Local Ministry in the Diocese of Southwark. Not unreasonably, the then Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Revd Tom Butler, was asked to write the Foreword to the publication. In it he indicated the significance of this development and hoped others would learn from it. The week after the publication the *Church Times* reported that the Bishop had

[356] (Reiss 2013)
[357] (Hodge 1983b)
[358] (Advisory Board of Ministry 1998)
[359] (Torry and Heskins 2006)

cancelled the scheme in his diocese.[360] He re-licensed everyone as NSMs. This was done without consultation with other involved persons and without any apparent ironic intent. The Bishop saw it as within his authority to act in this way.

The issue of power of bishops emerged in a number of different ways in this study. While the behaviour of Bishop Butler might appear anachronistic, it was matched by his predecessors who played key roles in the reverse process and succeeded in establishing the programme of training for NSMs/MSEs quickly. There is no evidence of consultation across dioceses; a previous Bishop of Southwark (Rt Revd Mervyn Stockwood) simply pursued his own vision of worker priests and this resulted in the first course for their training in the 1960s. Both Bishop Butler and Bishop Stockwood exercised their episcopal prerogative to do what they believed to be best for their diocese, even if the decisions were over fifty years apart. The lack of cohesion among the bishops on this subject from the 1960s onwards, and the very varied responses of different dioceses over time, had a significant impact on the identity awarded[361] to NSMs and MSEs in particular. This is unsurprising when the church of the 1960s, like much of the UK, was unaware of how the liberalism and individualism of that decade would play out. The world of work and the world of the church were contrasting environments. The secularity of the world was perceived to be implicitly contaminated in contrast to the purity of the church, marked out by its holiness and separation from the impurities of the world. The fundamental issue for the church in its licensing of MSE was one of place. At a simple level, work and home had become separate, but the criteria that decided which parish one belonged to were different. The unity of home, work and parish had long been shattered, but the realities of the need for differences in ministerial provision had been met by outsourcing the priesthood by the creation of industrial missions or the specialist chaplaincies, not by examining the concept of the parish. Similar stories to that in Southwark are repeatedly found in the archive. The authoritarian approach by the episcope, combined with the radical shift in terms of

[360] (Bowder 2006)
[361] (Appiah 2005)

lifestyle during the study period, leaves the church appearing to be signally out of touch.

It is into this setting that the new worker priests stepped from the 1960s onwards. As the review of the statistics indicated, the balance of NSMs and retired clergy to stipendiary priests had shifted so markedly by the first decade of the twenty-first century that it requires a particular kind of blindness not to understand that the structures of the church are severely out of kilter with its available clerical workforce. The community it is attempting to serve has changed as has the available ministerial provision. As the established church, where everyone in the community is to be served, not only the self-selecting congregation, it behoves the Church of England to examine the relationship between its provision and the needs of its community. Central to such exercises should be NSMs and especially MSEs who can speak not only with knowledge of how the community now functions and what its needs are likely to be, but numerically by their very presence indicate that other ordained priestly options are available. The findings indicate a focus on parish shortage, not on the potential of clergy who are focused on the world outside the parochial boundaries.

A further criticism of the church would be that while it duly espouses the needs of poor, marginalised and excluded people, it has failed to respond to the marginalisation of MSEs within the church itself. In the current flux of communication exchange, as Castells[362] indicated, the networked society thrives on the availability of information. Castells' most recent text[363] indicates how the 'space of flows' has been the key factor in the uprising in the Middle East, the *indignidas* movement in Spain, and the Occupy Wall Street initiative in the USA, with their global off-shoots. As a society that is now a space of flows rather than a geographic location, the power of communication needs to be re-calibrated in the minds of church leaders. The experts in managing this process are MSEs whose

[362] (Castells 1996)
[363] (Castells 2012)

very existence in the world of work depends on being skilled in this process. The stress experienced by MSEs is hardly ever identified with their work place, where they indicate the same level of pressure as everyone else experiences, but it is levelled at the church, whose inability to relate to this change in the way of life causes significant challenges. For many MSEs it seems to be impossible to relate to the church as they relate to other organisations and institutions in which they are engaged. Many MSEs report in the archive that to explain this world is central to their roles, and to present it as part of God's incarnated blessing to the world. Yet despite their efforts to 'bring the world to the church', time and again they find themselves listening to sermons critical of a world in which they and the other parishioners live and work.

Historically, the church played a key role in defining communities. The church placed in the centre of a village or town was often the key point of geographic recognition for that community. Churches still have special significance geographically, being one of the required symbols on ordnance survey maps, and with over two thirds having some level of preservation order on them as identified by the Church of England Year Book (p. lii).[364] However, despite its presence in terms of location and as worshipping community, MSEs argue that the church has not only become a critic of the modern world, but has not engaged with the impact of secularism. This experience has dictated the world of work and the experiences they have in it. Taylor wrote about this change:

> *I would like to claim that the coming of modern secularism in my sense has been coterminous with the rise of a society in which for the first time in history a purely self-sufficient humanism came to be a widely available option. I mean by this a humanism accepting no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing. Of no previous society was this true.* (Taylor 2007 p. 18)[365]

Taylor unpicked this in some detail to describe three elements of this new secularism. It includes the removal of God from public spaces, the fall in the number of people engaged in worship or espousing belief in a God, and the

[364] (Archbishop's Council 2013)
[365] (Taylor 2007)

emergence of a scenario where belief in God is only one set of beliefs to hold and often not the easiest or most unchallenged belief to hold on to (p.2-3).[366] This breakdown of the nature of secularisation into distinct elements illuminates the MSEs' comments in the archive and begins to reflect on why they are so welcome in the world of work. They are the 'God person', as several MSEs indicate they are called, who are in the same place as everyone else and where there is minimal challenge to modern secularism when engaging with work and God. Quite what being the God person means in these settings is not unpacked. It is exemplified to a degree by people turning to an MSE when a particular crisis or life event leaves them feeling the need for such a person who can give access to church rituals and support when the person requesting such support either does not know how to do this, or feels some historic resistance to doing it. This can be either because of some misunderstanding about the church or because, as some report, of a previous bad experience with the church. Conversely when MSEs do talk about being the God person, they adopt an institutional focus and project themselves as the representative of the church in that setting through their priesthood, even though such a person was not requested by their employer. By chance or through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the church has found an agency that can engage in the 'God business' without requiring an individual to repudiate the work aspects of their lives. It is a relationship that occurs on terms decided by the place of work and the social setting in which both the MSE and the other person relate, like other relationships. There is no perceived hierarchy as this is work-person to work-person contact, and it occurs at the same level as conversations about where is the best place to get a new electric kettle, for example. This new secularism therefore does not obstruct access to the church, or to a belief in God. It does, however, make such belief and associated activities an individual choice rather than a required community activity. The MSE, as an accidental and much of the time incidental 'God person' at work is a response originating through training and license in the church, but not actively placed in that setting by the church to meet a

[366] (Taylor 2007)

gap in access to the church that has arisen due to the modern thinking on individualism and secularism.

The element of self-choice is present in church-going as well and is often episodic and reflective of the general life style being followed by the church-goer. Some church-goers would criticise such an episodic approach (i.e. attending Sunday services and major feasts of the church's year irregularly) as not indicating sufficient effort being taken to show that involvement in church life is being properly valued. The nub of the issue is that non-church-goers seem to have developed a different view of spirituality and where a supreme being fits into that. MSEs are therefore, as Wickham predicted[367], a missionary figure, not in the old sense of one sent out to convert the masses, but as an available presence who is held in private, not institutional or organisational regard, in the place of work. This is very close to Allen's[368] model and as Davie observed:

> *… the phrase 'privatized religion' is misleading to the extent that it overlooks the origins of our beliefs and context in which they are held. Belief is not self-generated, nor does it exist in a vacuum; it has both form and content - albeit unorthodox form and content - which are shaped as much by the surrounding culture as by the individual believer.* (Davie 1994 p. 76)[369]

For MSEs therefore the defining feature of church is not the ecclesiology of the local parish or the directions taken by the episcope, but the experience of God as expressed in the theologically naïve but heartfelt comments and observations of their work colleagues.

7.3 Priesthood

One of the observations that many MSEs made was that their licensing as priests did not relate to their place of work. The service of licensing often occurred in a parish unrelated to their work community and made no mention of their principal role, i.e. whatever their calling was in occupational terms. When the archive is

[367] (Wickham 1998)
[368] (Allen 1930)
[369] (Davie 1994)

examined chronologically, it is clear that bishops have become more relaxed about the inclusion of the name of the workplace and therefore a more explicit recognition of the wider functioning of the individual. However, the principal element of the licensing is to a parish. The purpose of licensing a minister is to legitimate the ministry in a particular place. Historically, problems arose because of priests wandering away from their original place of ministry and involving themselves in other parishes without permission. The issuing of licenses was intended to stop that. However, it presents a significant anachronism for MSEs who of their very nature intend to minister away from their place of licensing. In ecclesiological terms, this is either very pragmatic of the church, or perhaps more significantly, indicative of the non-engagement with social change. Ordained and licensed to be worker priests, MSEs therefore find themselves obliged to engage in what for some of them felt like a legal charade in order to fulfil their calling.

The converse of this process of licensing is equally perverse. Less than a handful of records in the archive indicated that MSEs had sought any form of permission from their employers to be a worker priest in that setting. One person indicated that his boss was adamantly opposed and asked specifically for the individual not to engage in any ministerial practices. Other MSEs indicated that their employers were glad to have them in their new roles and in due course utilised them in this role for occasional events or activities. However, the question arose in early debates about worker priests if an individual was cheating the employer of their time and investment. The overwhelming sense of welcome in their workplaces that MSEs report suggests that in reality this is not an issue, but is indicative of the lack of transparency around the whole process. It is not possible at present to explain in any meaningful way why employers value such individuals, other than to point to their behavioural response to the development. The archive does not carry any accounts of people being banned from the workplace they have chosen as their ministerial site, rather of requests for help around occasional services, memorials for long-serving staff members who have died or one-to-one support, often to people more senior in the organisation than the MSE. There are some records of

MSEs being used as the conscience of the organisation, offering an informed and independent ethical voice.

The dissolution of role boundaries in both parochial and work terms for MSEs reflects the way in which social change has affected community life in general, but not essentially the church where the role of the ordained minister is still given special status. One contributor to the archive referred to having special status as 'doing the magic bits'. This can be decoded as referring to leading worship and providing the sacraments. However, ontologically and ecclesiologically it is recognised as meaning a great deal more. In 1986, John Hind described one of the key elements of ordained priesthood as:

> *The absence of any reference to the bishop is one factor which has contributed to the individualism of the emerging picture, and an analysis of the references to ministerial contacts demonstrates an overwhelming preponderance of diaconal activity.* (Hind 1986 p. 91)[370]

Hind therefore re-graded much of what MSEs do as diaconal activity and implicitly therefore questioned why such individuals had been ordained priests. This fits with some of Wickham's comments concerning the church's traditional view that the priest's role was to equip other Christians to go out into the world to both Christianise through their presence and behaviour, but also to be the presence of the church in that place. Wickham identified the failure of that strategy and the need for other approaches (p. 207)[371]. Though taken from a 1998 publication, Wickham published this originally in 1974, therefore in the early days of MSE experiments. Holmes offered a more structured and considered view of the nature of ordained ministry in the Anglican tradition:

> *We have identified eight ministerial functions which with varying degrees of emphasis, have been present at all times in the life of the Church in one form or another. There is a universal quality to these functions, and if they are lacking, the Church's ministry is deficient. These are preaching, teaching, prophecy, caring, evangelising, ritualising, administration, and discipline.* (Homes 1971 p. 93)[372]

[370] (Hind 1986)
[371] (Wickham 1998)
[372] (Holmes 1971)

This is a useful statement because it is contemporary with the beginning of MSE. This selection of functions is not exclusive to a parish priest, but can be found in any priest's practices, irrespective of geographic location. Such lists draw on the historic practices of ordained ministers. They do not distinguish in terms of holiness between different types of minster and present a framework for all ministers to adhere to. Historically, they read across the centuries and place modern priests in the same frame of reference as their predecessors. The question therefore is, why should parish priests have seen themselves in a different role to MSEs, as reflected in the archive? It is possible to suggest that in the absence of any inherent difference there are other factors at play. Clearly, as Hodge[373] indicated, there was a real belief in the different nature of the calling, with the MSEs' calling not being quite as proper as that of a stipendiary parish priest. There were doubts about the completeness of the MSE training when it occurred away from full-time college courses and did not generally include a course in Greek, much disliked but having to be endured by college students. More significantly perhaps, it pointed to a class difference among entrants to priestly training, especially as it opened the field of applicants to people who did not always have university entrance requirements or equivalents.

There may however, have been other theological and spiritual reasons for the reservations held between the two parties.

> *In all the debate about NSM surprisingly little attempt has been made to discover exactly what ministry in the world of work might be. Discussion of the subject has usually been dominated by concepts derived from parochial ministry, which has made it difficult for MSEs to enunciate their particular insights about ministry. They are constantly being hounded by questions such as 'Why do you need to be ordained to bear Christian witness at work? Doesn't your baptism authorize you to do that?' or 'What more are you doing at work now that you are ordained?' It is virtually impossible to answer these questions in terms of the questioner's assumptions. Such questions are inappropriate, because they tacitly assume that the parochial model of ministry should control the terms of discussion, and thus require MSEs to justify themselves in terms of the professional minister's*

[373] (Hodge 1983b)

> *language. But these terms are by nature foreign to MSEs, who would prefer to choose their own.* (Vaughan 1998 p.9)[374]

Vaughan's exposure of the assumptions made when questioning the priesthood of MSEs indicate a fixed position for parish priests and it may be possible to identify two. The first is that the incarnational manner of life that many MSEs enjoy through their work, seeing themselves as continuing God's eternal process of creation in the present (whether as an experimental nutritionist, an architect, a country planner, a dustbin man or a bus driver) can be seen to be different in many ways to the on-going nature of parish life as issues arising within the parish having to be resolved within that narrower context. Such parish life might be described as redemptive and therefore in the business of trying to put right what has gone wrong. A second contrast might be within the assumed spiritualties. Parish priests are in a fixed place and have what Benedictines might describe as stability. In contrast, MSEs are on the move between home, work and parish. This is more typical of the mendicant orders like the Franciscans or Dominicans. These are ways of capturing the very significant differences in world views in theological terms. Such comparisons begin to offer perspectives from which to assess the projected behaviours and if, as Appiah[375] argued, identity is given but not assumed, it is important to try and unpick why the two groups of ordained ministers see each other and their places and types of ministry so differently.

Perhaps the weightiest reason can be deduced from Mary Douglas:

> *Danger lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is indefinable. The person who must pass from one to another is himself in danger and emanates danger to others. The danger is controlled by ritual which properly separates him from his old status, segregates him for a time and then publicly declares his entry to his new status.* (Douglas 1966 pp 119-20)[376]

Drawing on her anthropological experience of working with shamans and other forms of folk healers with 'witch' craft-based healing, Douglas observed how such people were both revered and feared. They were seen to occupy a transitional

[374] (Vaughan 1998)
[375] (Appiah 2005)
[376] (Douglas 1966)

state in which their powers of healing were much sought after and admired, but when not in demand and engaged in their daily lives were seen to be frightening as they had authority related to supernatural gifts not enjoyed by other leaders of the community. The parallels with MSEs can be seen in that MSEs are wanted by the church when they can give insight and presence in a place where the institutional church cannot. In this the MSEs are seen to be powerful. The fear, or caution, arises when MSEs' work related gifts are not needed in the parish role but are present in the church community where their focus and approach is perceived to be different and where members of the working community relate to them in a way not experienced by the parish priest. MSEs are perceived to have a leadership position not endowed by the church. This is a potential threat and requires significant ego strength from the parish priest to receive it positively and not see such leadership skills as a threat.

Leadership is recognised in the Church of England in what to modern minds is obscure ways. There is an absoluteness about the power of bishops that is not unduly constrained by Diocesan Synods and results in highly localised developments. The MSE initiative demonstrates how, combined with NSMs is a mainstay of ministerial provision in some dioceses, and in others is still a small minority proportion of the available ordained clergy. The style of independent leadership by bishops in the Church of England suggests that little sense of corporate mission is present. The lack of integrated strategy appears more like President Mao's 'let a thousand flowers bloom' than the harsher question of how to maximise the available resources. There seems to be a degree of casualness about the management of MSE development, which in organisational terms would suggest antipathy by some bishops, or at least apathy. The implementation or development of MSE can therefore be significantly compromised by a change in episcopal leadership. Such a change may move a diocese from apathy to serious development and when the next bishop arrives back to apathy or antipathy to such ministry. This disjunction has not led to a unified progression or even evidential learning from the experience of this development. Every diocese has considered

MSE, but usually only from the perspective of their perceived internal needs; there is no evidence of a provincial or church wide approach with identification of advantages or disadvantages of MSE role development. It points to a very unclear sense of leadership in the episcopate and is certainly not easily paralleled in modern organisations. In the Church of England authority, responsibility and accountability of the episcopal role rest within tight geographic boundaries and the nature of the bishop's ordination with its specific geographic responsibilities as an area, assistant or diocesan bishop with responsibility for the 'cure' of souls in those patches.

Some people would argue that this is the church being counter-cultural, rejecting the managerialism that they see around them. While many service oriented organisations have adopted varieties of transformational leadership as developed by Bernard Burns[377] and later James Bass,[378] the church has yet to do this at its key leadership strata. In not accepting transformational leadership styles, the church has not utilised as fully as it could the episcopal positions as influencers, motivators, stimulants and enablers of individual activity in their organisations. Consequently, many church-goers do not feel empowered, and the church struggles to create successive generations of leadership. This means that the church's vision is lost and the culture of the church becomes local and detached even from neighbouring communities. For MSEs in particular this can be very frustrating and the degree of cognitive dissonance that they experience can be quite marked as they learn to live with fundamentally different styles of leadership. Many of them experience transformational leadership in their work lives and may indeed be responsible for instilling such styles of leadership in their work places. They can see the inherent benefits of transformational leadership techniques and styles and yet recognise that promoting it will make it seem that MSEs have access to powerful arcana seemingly not otherwise accessible in much of the church environment. Simon Western remarked on examples of transformational

[377] (Burns 1978)
[378] (Bass 1985)

leadership in some detail. While the evidence about its effectiveness is mixed, if the volume of literature on the subject is assessed, it is clear that at least in some types of organisations it has traction.[379] The issue here is not the advocacy of a particular management style, but the wish for a consistent style that does not neglect to examine and value the evidence for change and development. Western also described models of asymmetric leadership. He identified a number of movements that have much in common with the church who have utilised such approaches, including the black liberation work done by Martin Luther King. Transformational leadership effectively cuts through structures and positions to maximise resources as needed and as generated. Many MSEs have experienced this and that is reflected in their knowledge and experience of the changed society. The perception of the church as out of touch and unwilling to develop itself organisationally is one of the blocks (thromboembolic clots as an analogy used earlier) to the development and free circulation of good practice from the world to the church and back again. Many MSEs experienced this blockage and used it as a deliberate wish to be different themselves, wanting to march to a different drum. Taking such a counter-cultural approach marginalises MSEs in the church just as much as their priestly role places them in in a different position in the world of work.

7.4. Parish

There is no evidence of a significant move in the Church of England to change the nature of its parish base in the foreseeable future. Occasionally bishops' orders change the local boundaries of parishes to respond to moves in population and to address the shortage of the stipendiary clergy. The media regularly carry stories about the falling number of people practising their faith, but a number of cities point to growing congregations while rural ones continue to fall[380,381]. It is difficult to describe the parish as dying, but it is true that the nature of service attendance has changed. Significant midweek congregations have become popular and

[379] (Western 2008)
[380] (Brierley 2006)
[381] (Brierley & Miles 2006)

parents with children are attracted to churches where there is already a large congregation. It is into this mainstay of Anglican life in the Church of England that MSEs find themselves drawn.

The archive shows that MSEs have a range of observations about the parish as part of their ministerial life. Some saw being a worker priest as giving them credibility in their parish ministry and so enabled an enhanced pastoral sensitivity because of their work experience. Some MSEs saw themselves as the eyes of the church in the workplace, and that it was through the parish that what had been seen and learnt at work was played back, received and interpreted. They report being accepted for their ministry by parishioners, and that it is only some clergy who saw them as ‘part-time priests’ or ‘hobby priests’ who could not be called upon to carry the burden of parish work because of their employment responsibilities. Often it is the sense relayed to them of perceived incompleteness in their priestly role that causes greatest angst. Too often the MSEs’ experience includes accounts of the frustrations of parish priests as their own expectations of growth in ministry are frustrated when life in the parish becomes monotonous and non-challenging. It is difficult to determine from the archive what the norm for an MSE in parish life is. There is an argument that each parish is different and is therefore a case study of one. However, charged with serving the local community, the parish priest’s experience is as much a comment on the community being served as the life of the church itself. Many parish priests would no doubt wish to change the norm. MSEs indicate that parish life is routine and that their contribution is often in covering for absent priests, or being approached by area deans to stand-in in other parishes. The archive reveals that some dioceses have considered that MSE will be a deanery resource and from Sunday to Sunday, MSEs do not know where they will be leading worship or be involved in types of services. This complements the observation from MSEs in the archive used for this study that it is difficult to achieve growth in their spiritual lives because there are inadequate levels of support received by them from their parish engagement.

Alan Billings offered a particular insight into the changing role of parish clergy and therefore the function of the parish:

> *When we look back over previous centuries we can see that the clergy, especially Anglican clergy, have played any number of roles. They have been school teachers, law enforcement officers, dispensers of charity, physicians, registrars and so on. Most of these roles were stripped from the clergy during the course of the nineteenth century as each of these tasks became the prime responsibility of discrete professions. What happened in the latter half of the twentieth century was merely the continuation of an older tradition, but adapting it to changing circumstances.* (Billings 204 p. 7)[382]

This helpful insight points to parishes having been supported by clergy who were themselves engaged in other occupations. As they lost these roles in the nineteenth century, the parish priest, with his role essentially tied to a church building and its attached community, came into existence. Prior to that, they too would have been working and therefore were the previous 'brothers and sisters' of today's MSEs. Much of the thinking about the nature of the modern parish is therefore comparatively recent, and yet is projected without an appropriate historical context. This adds to the alienation of MSEs who therefore see themselves in this older tradition. Ecclesiologically, ignoring this earlier tradition is an important point because the history underlines the ever changing nature of ordained priesthood and therefore parochial life. There seems to have been a progressive series of changes, primarily dependent on the community in which the priestly role is placed. MSE therefore could quite rightly be seen as one more manifestation of this changing phenomenon. The lack of planning of the changes in the nineteenth century mimic the lack of planning associated with the beginning of MSE in the twentieth century. While it is tempting to point to an on-going haphazardness in how the church operates, it is more properly correct to see the interrelatedness of the society in which the church exists and the expectation that as that society changes, so will the manifestations and functional roles of the church. As the changes in society can be unplanned and haphazard, so they are in the church

[382] (Billings 2004)

The parish is the local representation of the body of the church, understood to be the neighbourhood manifestation of the mystical body of Christ on earth. The process of change can be represented by certain physiological processes. The homeostatic process highlights the constant small and unconscious adjustments that the body makes and the changes in the parish and the role of the parish priest can be seen as part of the slow adjustment to external changes and stimulation. However, for many people in the church there is no cohesive narrative to help them both see and understand the nature of these changes. This results in confusion about the roles of different ministers and the purpose of the parish other than to serve parishioners with opportunities for regular worship, a social network and a form of chaplaincy for 'special events'. The archive has an item by MR who describes how, over supper with parishioners from the church in Epsom where he served, it became clear that despite having been part of the same parish as one of the pioneers of the MSE ministry, the parishioners knew little about the significance of his MSE role in the parish, despite various items written about it in the parish magazine. For those parishioners he was someone who preached in a particular way (that could said about any priest), offered a particular sort of listening, and supported them knowledgably in their spiritual journey. They could not distinguish his parish ministry from that of the other clergy, or identify any way in which the parish had particularly supported him. Both he and the parishioners were part of the same body and therefore enjoyed the benefits of the same homeostatic processes.

An ecclesiological question arises therefore about what role MSEs have in creating new communities other than parishes. Martin Coppen wrote from a rural perspective when he reflected on how the parish itself had become no more than a visiting place for nomads who know it to be an oasis of refreshment:

> *The sense of place has been greatly eroded in favour of a neo-nomadic detachment, an ability to flourish anywhere without putting down roots: living without abiding. But even nomads need to know where the watering holes are. Perhaps the place of churches these*

> *days is as an oasis in the desert, offering living water to refresh the traveller on the move.* (Coppen 2005 p. 99)[383]

If this analysis has some truth, then what sort of new community might an MSE be involved in creating? The industrial missioners and some of the early worker priests attempted to find a place at work where they could provide a Eucharist or establish Bible reading groups. There seemed to be little demand for these and over time they died away. John Davis, himself an MSE, observed when writing in 1986 that:

> *Nevertheless it leaves the MSE as essentially a parish-based minister, rather than a specialized ordained industrial minister. Unfortunately, as parish ministers, they are often shamefully treated as second-class citizens... But there is a priceless potential in the MSE in his parish. For it is he above all who is capable of ensuring that 'the Church's ministry and mission to the world of work' is kept firmly on the agenda of his local church. The Church is, by its very nature, a missionary organization. MSEs experienced in relating faith, work and worship could become the Church's vanguard in mobilizing the interest, concern and prayer of local congregations for its 'ministry to the world of work'.* (Davis 1986 pp 78-9)[384]

The nature of community has changed fundamentally, as Castells[385] spelt out. In this ‘space of flows’ the communication and who it is shared with is the definer of community. MSEs therefore are working in a setting where they are an integral part of the space of flows and therefore of the associated communication-based communities. The role of MSEs in these settings depends first and foremost not on their ordained minister status, but on their professional excellence. It is only because of the competence and skills as workers that they are able to contribute to this activity. The nature of the contributions may be mediated by their priestly nature, but the content of the communication is primarily professional in nature. It is usually only when asked to take a theological perspective, as in ‘but as a vicar, what would you say …’ that anything specific can be contributed. More significant is acceptance of an MSE as a competent professional and priest rather than as a

[383] (Coppen 2005)
[384] (Davis 1986)
[385] (Castells 1996)

priest who works in that setting. The community therefore is totally unlike anything recognised as a parish and operates in significantly different parameters. Fuller and Vaughan described the ecclesiological potential in these terms:

> *The evidence of MSEs suggests that by and large they see all those with whom they work as actual or certainly potential members of the Kingdom. … This 'inclusive' view of the Church is that upon which the parochial structure of the Church of England is based, and is an integral part of its very raison d'être at its birth in the Reformation - a national Church for all the people of the land. Paradoxically many parish priests seem now to be operating in practice if not in theory on a far more 'exclusivist' or 'congregational' model of the Church, seeing membership in terms of those with an explicit commitment. Could it be that one feature of future MSE stories might be a recall to the Church at large to return to its more inclusive language?* (Fuller & Vaughan 1986a p. 208)[386]

The communities that MSEs are called to develop are more inclusive, are work teams capable of recognising the nature of the ongoing social change in the world of work and are equipped to welcome the unchurched into their midst. Such communities with their emphasis on people's occupational backgrounds will be strongly organisational with high expectations about the ways in which matters are handled and businesses conducted, with wise use of time and resources. Such an approach is very challenging for many church communities where a much higher level of tolerance exists in terms of how business is conducted.

Anthony Hurst, an MSE, comments on the role of MSEs in such developing communities:

> *One of the most frightening metaphors for the Church today is of a group of people retreating into the security of their own laager, where they can continue their own arcane rituals with self-justifying conviction that they are perpetuating a hallowed tradition - without having to venture out into the unhallowed unknown. It is from this unknown that the MSE returns; because he knows the world of work beyond the laager, he is able to demonstrate to the Church that it too is a hallowed part of God's loved creation.* (Hurst 1986 p. 60)[387]

The essence of creating communities therefore from the MSEs' perspective is about ensuring professional credibility in the work community in which they engage, competence in managing the space of flows and the communications

[386] (Fuller and Vaughan 1986a)
[387] (Hurst 1986)

therein, but essentially playing a key role in blessing, even sacramentalising the world of work as part of God's on-going incarnational presence in the world. It is the role of the ordained priest to offer to people God's presence in their work. This capacity to recognise the presence of God and theologise it enables the communities to recognise the role of MSEs and therefore validate it within the communities in which MSE is present.

With this as background, it is easy to see why so many MSE sources by and about MSEs refer to their ministry as being 'on the edge', or similar variants. The sense exists that MSEs are outsiders in the church and outsiders in the world of work. However, when viewed from the perspective of the parish, it appears that MSEs are viewed as simply another variant of the provision of ordained clergy that any diocese might have. The reality is that MSEs have not been parachuted in, but are 'home grown' and therefore live with the people around them, who know them previously having been members of the laity. From the perspective of work, MSEs are regarded almost totally in terms of their competence as professionals in whichever field they work; the priesthood 'bit' sitting very lightly to their work role. In ecclesiological terms therefore, MSEs are fulfilling their ordained functions in much the same way as any other priest; the question is, what does their existence indicate about the church and its presence in the world? If the church wishes to engage in depth outside of the self-constraining boundaries of the parish church and local community, here are the resources to do that. However, if this is a personal response to a particular call to ministry and mission then that presents different challenges to the institution. Certainly, MSEs represent significant challenges to the thinking and practice of the church.

7.5 Conclusion

Given the numbers of people coming forward for training in the non-stipendiary ministries when set against the numbers offering themselves for stipendiary ministry, it is difficult not to conclude that there is something significant going on in the church. What does this mean ecclesiologically and is it possible to determine

its likely direction and impact? MSEs as part of this NSM trend represent a significant sub-group. In professional circles, questions would be asked about how and why such a specialism had emerged. Usually such a specialism would not evolve in any professional field unless two features are present. First, that there is a demand in terms of services that are not currently being met by the standard provision. Second, that there is a cadre of individuals capable of, and interested in, filling such a role. In reviewing the MSE perspectives in church, priesthood and parish, the demand for such a service could probably be described as low. It is not clear that the organisations in which MSEs worked were crying out for them, nor the churches to which they were attached. The second reason therefore - the cadre of people coming forward for such ministry - becomes the key issue. They are people who have come to ministry by the mechanisms used by the church to culture its ordained ministers. However, the MSEs see themselves not as stipendiary parish priests, or primarily as priests called to support parish ministries, but as priests who continue to work for their own living and take their priesthood into the workplace.

In order to achieve this, MSEs need to complete a two- or three-year part-time programme, often based on distance-learning techniques. This is an individual development journey with limited time for formation. MSEs continue their professional formation and their career progression at the same time, hence they are on a dual development track; one that they have pursued for many years in their occupation, and a new one, which will lead them into work-place ministry. The development of the MSE role has added to the diversity of practice in ordained ministry at a time when the church is perceived to be losing numbers and church attendance continues to fall year on year, even if the rate of decline has itself fallen more recently. This decline in church attendance has gone hand-in-hand with a decline in income in the Church of England, resulting in greater cost consciousness about the expenses of providing ordained ministry. It can be seen as either fortuitous, or the work of the Holy Spirit, that this cadre of ordained ministers has come forward because MSEs are available at least to be conscripted

to public church ministry and provide public services, helping to cover the shortfall in provision and at low cost in comparative terms. Given the need for such an adjunct to the available numbers of ordained ministers, it must therefore be strange for MSEs to report a lack of welcome for their presence from stipendiary clergy.

This lack of welcome may in part be due to MSEs displaying different insights into the nature of the theology that underpins their work in comparison to stipendiary clergy, especially in the interpretation of key theological concepts like sacrament, blessing and grace. The evidence that MSEs contribute nearly as many hours per week to the church on a voluntary basis as their stipendiary counterparts are remunerated for giving also points to a different approach to priesthood based on voluntary commitment without material reward.[388] Their role is therefore very similar to members of the laity who give their time and resources voluntarily to the church and receive no reward other than expenses.

It is probably fair therefore to see MSEs as an anomalous presence in the organisation as they do not fit into an agreed and prescribed role. The lack of specific post-ordination training or continuing ministerial development also point to an organisation that has not absorbed the development of MSEs and made them part of its regulated life. However, when considered institutionally, a number of historical parallels can be identified. The closest is perhaps the development of religious orders. These have an individual origin, usually with a vocation to address some perceived shortfall in the life of the church, and are supervised by the church. The specificity of their ministry can sometimes lead to conflict with other organs of the church such as bishops or local synods and it requires bishops or councils to resolve these difficulties. However, once established, the church rarely abolishes religious orders outright. What happens is that over time, orders either continue to flourish, legitimating the nature of their calling, or they die out through lack of novices entering the order and the group therefore comes to a

[388] (Morgan 2010)

timely close. Similar to MSEs, religious orders usually have the backing of one or more bishops who sponsor their work, not least because of how bishops see that such a ministry would address problems that otherwise will not be addressed in their diocese. The parallel with religious orders underlines once more the individualistic nature of bishops' decision-making

The parallel between MSEs and religious orders is traceable to Michael Ramsey who as early as 1960, wrote:

> *I would venture a guess that 'part-time' priests may emerge in some 'order', initiated by those with the new vocation, with its ideal expressed in a common rule, as it will be a hard vocation with many hazards.* (Ramsey 1960 p. 25)[389]

The brief article by Ramsey set out a vision and a possible solution to the challenges of the MSE role never adopted, but which recognised how the church normally responds to such developments in supplementary ministry. Ramsey's argument was that there is no such thing as a part-time priest; that ontologically, once ordained, the individual remains always a priest. He goes on to suggest that any notion that such priests are being ordained to supplement the numbers available to provide church based services is 'facile'. Ramsey discussed the development of worker priests as fulfilling a role that engages with the 'sacred in the secular', a role traditionally associated with the laity. Ramsey foresaw the laity as benefitting from having clerical colleagues experienced and skilled in such work. His assessment reads as being years ahead of its time. He delved into a subject that he saw as unstoppable, and envisaging integration of MSE into the life and mission of the church as both necessary and desirable. It is significant that the leader of the Province of York should take such a constructive view about the development of MSE before it was properly launched and legitimated, given that the experiences of MSEs continue to be so ambivalent.

Ecclesiologically, the experience of MSEs, the lack of structured response, perhaps along the visionary lines suggested by Ramsey, and the challenges of

[389] (Ramsey 1960)

falling numbers in church when a ‘low cost’ priesthood manifests itself, all point to the need for a structured, strategic response. The story however is one of individual diocesan bishops choosing to develop the MSE initiative or ignore it, as was their right. It reveals a picture of haphazard decision-making and lack of analysis of the potential of MSE in terms of mission in the world outside the walls and parameters of individual parishes and their churches. The ending of one bishop’s reign and the arrival of his successor could result in the reversal of their predecessor’s approach. The independence of the diocesan bishop and their authority to act has not been conducive to the maximisation of the MSE role or the shifting of the perspective of the church from the life of the parish with its falling numbers and income to the world where the MSE has access, networks and influence. MSE has been established in an institution where the routine mechanisms of decision-making in the organisations in which MSEs were embedded only applied at the whim of the bishop. This dysfunctionalism reveals an ecclesiology which is comparatively unstructured and with the capacity to harm or limit inappropriately the expectations of those working with the outcomes of this approach to leadership. It is now necessary to identify the implications of this ecclesiology as revealed through the MSE experience.

Chapter 8

Discussion of the implications of the study

> *Without appropriate accountability the story is likely to develop in terms of outstanding examples of individual personal ministry by those individuals with a tough constitution, coupled with stories of isolation, leading to virtual disappearance from this focus on ministry of those without personal charisma.* (Fuller & Vaughan 1986b p.200)[390]

8.1. Introduction

This study is focused on the examination of two issues: first the development of MSE between 1960 and 2000, and second, what this development reveals about the ecclesiology and socio-cultural development of the Church of England. If the preceding chapters were read as a management report, conclusions such as ideological conflict, poor communication, no planning, failure to develop strategy, lack of vision and aims, and no evaluation programme would all be reached, and fairly so. The successful achievement of a concept first espoused nearly a century earlier was then followed by a development phase in which significant numbers of MSEs (no actual record is available) were trained and then ordained. As the 1990s progressed, MSEs had expanded in numbers (fluctuating around 300 in CHRISM membership, but from Ranken's own handwritten survey, probably nearer a 1000 priests). As a contributor to public dialogue, the MSE narrative had begun to take a back seat as the year 2000 approached. The more heated subject of women's ordination had moved into the central space. The period 2000-2010 has witnessed repeated efforts in CHRISM to find people to stand for election to their governing committee and in the meantime proposed projects (in particular a project on drawing out the components of a theology of MSEs) have run into the ground for lack of resources to deliver them.

[390] (Fuller & Vaughan 1986b)

It could be argued therefore that MSE is a project and an experiment that has had its day and that little more can be expected of it. As a result, Fuller and Vaughan's[391] conclusions have been confirmed. By 2000 the scene is one of contradiction. Bishops seem to be keener to utilise MSE in parish support than exploring further the potential of the development for mission. The calling to be a priest at work is perceived to be individualistic and separatist, isolating them from the body of the church and leading to little actual growth in terms of evangelism or mission. A contradiction arises in that each MSE has to be ordained and licensed by a bishop and if there was significant reservation about the continuation of the role, then bishops were in a position to stop such ordinations. Yet, a number of dioceses that had historically low numbers of MSEs have committed themselves since 2010 to develop the numbers of MSEs and expand the ministerial options available to MSE. Chelmsford is a notable example of this. Previous bishops in Chelmsford took little interest in MSE ministry, but the current incumbent (2014) has set about remedying this with some vigour and neighbouring dioceses are now taking note. As the subject of MSEs seems to be falling off the collective agenda, elements of the church suddenly seem to be discovering it for the first time. Herein is one of the conundrums of church life: the speed of change is not just slow, but erratic and dependent on individual bishops rather than strategic organisational decision-making with major implications for the individuals concerned.

8.2 The cultural context

Marwick noted the multiplicity of social and cultural changes occurring in the 1960s.[392] The work of historians and theologians all point to something significant happening in that decade. Among many other things, the established culture of the UK was challenged and ways of life changed significantly. Freedoms of choice increased dramatically in line with increases in personal resources, and the institutions of society were challenged as the behaviours of social elites were

[391] (Fuller & Vaughan 1986b)
[392] (Marwick, 1998)

satirised and unthinking respect for them was undermined. It was a period of immigration from the Commonwealth countries, political change of direction in national government, and significantly, a questioning and challenging public media became apparent. It was in this context that MSE appeared as a 'new' initiative in the Church of England. This development did not arise without antecedents and decades of lobbying. McLeod[393] for example traced some of the changes back to the nineteenth century, but they came to fruition in the 1960s and in a period of major cultural and social change. One development triggered others and the church, as a social institution, was not immune to this process. From this study it is right to conclude that the relationship between the development of MSE in the church and the other cultural and societal changes going on in the same period were interrelated.

The socio-cultural changes in the 1960s were matched by theological and ecclesiological developments. Liberation theology emerged from Latin America with its 'bias to the poor' as David Sheppard put it when applying the thinking to his own situation in Liverpool.[394] Liberation theology was to go on in the 1960s to spawn 'queer theology' and to be strongly associated with feminism in theology and issues of race.[395] All of these undermined the traditional institutional bias of the church and opened the organisation to a range of new initiatives of which MSE was only one. As the regard for authority diminished in the 1960s so a number of ginger groups arose in the Church of England, parallel to the pressure groups and the lobbying activities in public life. Two in particular seemed to have run alongside the development of MSE. One was concerned with the Sexual Offences Act of 1967. This Act legalised certain types of homosexual activity in the UK and in 1969 the Committee for Homosexual Equality was formed, having as one of its key agenda items the Church of England's attitude to homosexuality. A second group concerned the ordination of women. Debates on the ordination of women to the

[393] (McLeod 2007)
[394] (Sheppard 1983)
[395] (Hennelly.A.T. 1990)

priesthood had been on the agenda of the Lambeth Conferences since 1920. In due course a group of women made sure that the issue about their ordination was debated regularly by the bishops from the 1960s onwards. This process of change in both initiatives shares many of the same staging-posts as MSE and offers insights into how the church faces difficult decisions. This demonstrates that MSE was not the only process in the Church of England during this period to be the subject of a particular form of decision-making.

Another form of challenge to the church in the UK during the 1960s was the charismatic renewal movement. This was part of a wider neo-pentecostalist movement that manifested itself in several denominations and included developments like House Churches and Cell Churches. Though the adherents of the charismatic movement did not by and large leave a denomination, their methods of worship, types of leadership and focus on the Holy Spirit gave a very individualistic perspective to Christian living. In the 1960s this movement too, created a focus on the nature of organisational authority a church should adopt and with its almost sectarian separation, experienced significant changes in leadership and styles of being church. Percy[396] offered an analysis of this development and in particular identified the subjective nature of the religious experience that separated such practitioners from the more routine forms of communal worship found in mainstream institutional practice.

Following Geertz's understanding of culture:

> *Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatically.* (Geertz 1973 p. 5)[397]

The identification of a cultural shift is of marked significance because it reflects how things change. Human behaviours are full of symbols having to be

[396] (Percy 1998)
[397] (Geertz 1973)

understood and implicit meanings having to be responded to rationally. If a cultural shift, such as emerged in the 1960s takes place, then those symbols either change and new ones come into view or new meanings are attributed to existing symbols, and implicit communication and knowledge are redefined. This can produce marked institutional dislocation and anxiety as traditional linkages and understandings are lost and new, un-institutionalised symbols reveal themselves. There is also an implicit competition to give meaning to these new symbols; in this process, no one is privileged. Percy reflected on this in these terms:

> *... knowledge requires commitment in order to assume an authority, and this must be an ongoing dynamic process which is open to constant renewal. ... A knowledge that ceases to have value or meaning for a community inevitably loses some of its authority. Knowledge and authority must therefore be continually rediscovered in the ordinary process of dynamic sociality; it can never assume a right to privilege without the sacrifice of engagement and debate.* (Percy 2005 p. 36)[398]

The Church of England with its privileged position of being Established and therefore one of the key institutions of the State was relatively unaware of the degree of social and cultural change and was slow to realise the point being made by Percy that the claims to authority were being lost because there was a perceived lack of commitment by the church to respond to the social and cultural changes in any meaningful way. With this went the loss of the opportunity and capacity to influence the new meanings and symbols presenting themselves during that decade.

The church did not realise that a new ecclesiology was emerging that focused on personal choice, diminished regard for authority, and lower levels of commitment to the old institutions. It is fair to conclude that the potential and significance of ‘experiments’ (like MSE, cell churches, house churches) seen during this period were ignored because of the strength amongst bishops in particular of the traditional patterns of authority followed in the past. What might be described as ecclesial density was in place because of the complexity of the church demonstrated in part by the type of authority given to bishops and the

[398] (Percy 2005)

individualism of their decision-making, the nature of its structures, the way in which the church was influenced by many different phenomena at once and in managing this mix seeking to 'keep everyone on board'. In consequence, the basic homeostatic nature of the church resulted in it opting to making very limited, if any changes, apparently happy to let things run if they were not perceived to be a significant problem. Kenneth Thompson,[399] writing in 1970, titled his assessment of *Bureaucracy and Church Reform: The organizational response of the Church of England to Social Change 1800-1965*, by identifying the mechanisms that maintained the separateness of the Church of England and its aloofness from other organisational and institutional changes occurring around it. The fact that MSE began in this same decade points to at least some of the bishops being visionary in their practice and not overwhelmed by the traditional ways of thinking. However, they were acting as individualistically as those adopting the new culture of the 1960s were. These bishops saw MSE as offering a way of connecting with the evolving society, which the main strands of the church seemed unaware of. The analysis of the archive used for this study points to how MSEs felt that they were carrying the burden for such institutional dislocation and indecision, and experiencing the anxiety that this generated. They were also on the receiving end of the church's disregard for other organisations, demonstrated by its failure to engage with the workplaces to which it was licensing MSEs.

8.3 Ecclesial decision-making

The ecclesial density can be further demonstrated in the General Synod paper on spending plans for 2011-13, which could almost be read as a 'suicide note' in the political sense:

> *But others argued that the ministry model of a stipendiary priest in every parish was broken in much of the country. There was a need for the Church to re-imagine its presence and re-work its existing structures. New models of ministry needed time and resources to develop.* (General Synod 2009a p.2)[400]

[399] (Thompson 1970)
[400] (General Synod of the the Church of England 2009a)

One set of arguments acknowledged the structural weaknesses in the current provision of stipendiary ministers. Concerns about difficulties to recruit priests in the Northern Province were set against complaints that some dioceses had more stipendiary priests than agreed and were paying them more than the nationally agreed figure; these are proof of internal conflict and no shared vision. No clearer message could be given about the independence of dioceses and bishops in their decision-making. In the same document of the General Synod debate in June 2009 a highly significant pair of decisions were pursued. First an open recognition that:

> *At more than one of the conferences the issue of under-performing clergy serving as a blockage to the Church's growth was mentioned. It was suggested by one delegate that the Church had a tendency 'to put up with poor performance because of its concern to be pastoral. This was sowing the seeds of its own decline'. It was noted too that 'the decline in church attendance was often sharpest in parishes where there was poor leadership [and] it was often those parishes which required most financial subsidy'. Strategies were required to address specific cases of under-performance.* (General Synod 2009a pp 2-3)[401]

While the assertions of underperformance were not tested in that debate, it is logical to see the assertions as reflective of the problem of ensuring that mechanisms of accountability and discipline for clergy (being introduced at this date[402]) were actually applied. The sense picked up from the MSE archive of lack of 'management' of stipendiary clergy is evident in this General Synod debate. The confusion of roles in the episcope between the bishop as 'Father in God' (maintaining discipline and pastoral care of clergy) with oversight of parish life and the 'cure of souls' i.e. mission and ministry to the laity, produces a classic double bind for bishops who, with their independence of decision-making, seem to get caught in some very disjunctive behaviours.

The second decision concerned a number of management practices:

> *… there was general acknowledgement that there was scope for better working between the offices of dioceses and cathedrals (and bishops). One conference noted that the lack of collaboration was a symptom of the Commissioners providing independent funding*

[401] (General Synod of the the Church of England 2009a)
[402] (General Synod of the the Church of England 2009b)

> *streams, and the cost of the inefficiencies this created was borne by poorer parts of the Church in reduced Commissioners' support. It was suggested that the Commissioners' funds could be used to provide incentives for collaboration between dioceses, cathedrals and bishops.* (General Synod 2009a p. 9)[403]

and,

> *There was almost unanimous agreement at the conferences that there was a need to improve accountability and evaluation in respect of all funding streams. Auditing the effectiveness of the funding was a key way to address the inadequacies of the current formula-based distribution systems. However, there was concern to ensure that the Archbishops' Council/Commissioners avoided the kind of box ticking that was associated with Government funding. It was generally agreed that evaluation should primarily take place in a local context, although dioceses should provide some account of their strategic plans and evaluation to the Archbishops' Council/the Commissioners (as the 'donors') so that they could facilitate accountability between dioceses.* (General Synod 2009a p.11)[404]

Perhaps it is to be expected that powerful individuals will disagree and act against each other's interests, but is a somewhat surprising activity in an institution where the very teachings of its founder mitigated against such practices. The behaviour is part of a wider picture illuminated by the second of the four quotations above from the General Synod 2009a documents that there was a lack of accountability and evaluation among clergy (including bishops) concerning expenditure and inadequate auditing and appraisal of outcomes. Such a failure illuminates an institutional culture where concerns about material matters do not hold equal place with the spiritual or holy.

At this point a significant contradiction kicks in. Instead of pressing for greater transparency and accountability in the decision-making about resource utilisation, this General Synod in 2009 seems to have gone into some sort of default mode and criticised obvious ways of addressing these problems by focusing on the possible solutions as bureaucratic mechanisms to which they had a particular antipathy. This is a critical leap. The link of a possible response to the managerial problems at diocesan and national level in 2009 with an aversion to particular

[403] (General Synod of the the Church of England 2009a)
[404] (General Synod of the the Church of England 2009a)

types of bureaucracy is not only denial of the problem, but a form of transference as it becomes easier to criticise solutions rather than address the identified problem. These behaviours point to an immature organisation and behaviours that would be challenged in other structures. However, from an institutional perspective, such activities are perceived to be 'normal'. As can be seen from the summary at the end of the General Synod paper, this decision was not challenged, but welcomed as a form of 'engagement', which the paper asserts had not previously been achieved. The nature of the avoidance mechanism engaged in is not challenged and confirms the implicit priorities of the church's agenda.

The above example is used to drawing out a particularly important observation voiced by MSEs in the archive. The image of the crystal used for study of the archive has broken open the material in different ways, hence it was possible to observe the church seeing MSEs as part of the NSM cadre, in some ways accountable for their own lack of presence and engagement in the church. However, that did not address the mechanisms that exist in the church for making decisions. As many MSEs pointed out in the archive, there was limited apparent wish to engage with them by both priests and bishops. This was particularly demonstrated by the lack of tailoring of post-ordination training, limited continuing ministerial development, a lack of episcopal leadership of the initiative, and failure to utilise the priests' professional skills in the life of the church. The sense of marginalisation was critiqued by MSEs from an organisational perspective. Many MSEs are responsible for significant parts of organisations and can therefore judge from that perspective. What the General Synod papers demonstrate vividly is that the sort of managerial and goals-based decision-making which linked inputs to outputs was not part of the churches culture even by 2009, let alone during the study period. The image of ships passing in the night springs to mind.
From an institutional perspective, something different was going on. The principal focus of the decision makers was and remains the stipendiary priests as the institution still relates to, and operates around this concept. The logic of not being particularly focused on the group of MSE priests becomes clear. Institutionally they

are operating on the margins and while they may be valuable in terms of a presence of the church where otherwise there might be none, and in giving ‘cover’ to parishes, their principle role and function is seen through the lens of the parish. One has to conclude that MSEs and NSMs in general are seen by the institutional church in terms of adjuncts to parish work and not as a branch of ordained church people on their own terms. The church’s internalised and even institutionalised perspective is to prioritise what is seen to be the traditional mechanisms for encouraging Christian life as profiled in the holiness of parish life. MSEs represent the material world, their discourse is in bureaucratic terms, hence they are perceived not to engage with the implicit symbols and priorities of the church, the very counter of the church failing to engage with the symbols and priorities of society and its culture.

The perceived role of MSE as a parish adjunct rather than a specific work-based ministry leads to a further conclusion that concerns the nature of bishops and the authority that they possess. The existence of defensive and separate positions in the church, with bishops identified as being in different camps around different types of churchmanship, attitudes to women, homosexuality, and sexual practice in general, reveal how the bishops exist in an institution where their individual decision-making is tolerated, and in some circumstances perhaps actively encouraged. This is an institutional perspective, in contrast to an organisational one. The institutional stance defends values and ways of being, taking a long-term perspective and relating to a state of being. The organisational approach is concerned with the achievement of aims and objectives, logistical and work force matters and survivability in management terms. The decision-making has been institutionalised and is therefore, because of the ‘merit’ associated with the position of bishop, beyond criticism or challenge from an organisational perspective. Coming from settings where challenge and transparency are quintessential components of the working life, the institutionalised decision-making behaviours of bishops seems strange, even alienating, to MSEs.

Recognition of this difference in decision-making leads to the further observation that if the MSE initiative was assessed as an experimental development in most organisations, there would have been clear strategic leadership and evaluation issues arising from close work with those involved. To allow MSEs to undertake their ministry and not be adequately integrated into the structures of the church could be seen as a form of abuse of MSEs' goodwill, as reflected by contributors to the archive. Some MSEs felt this to be due to the fact that they cost the church little and therefore can be ignored in a way that their stipendiary colleagues cannot. That might be a fair observation in organisational terms, but the conclusion from an institutional perspective is that it is not fair. There is no deliberate intention to abuse the good offices of MSEs; rather, because their role sits lightly to the institution, bishops do only what is required rather than managing MSEs as they might expect of leadership in their workplaces. What bishops are doing to MSEs is characteristic of how they operate generally, hence there has been no fundamental questioning of this practice. The conclusion is therefore that there is no evidence that MSEs are particularly disadvantaged, but major questions arise about the culture inherent in an institution that seems to encourage such behaviour by the bishops when perceived from the wider societal perspective. In organisational terms, it would be seen as an unexplainable waste of precious resources.

Based on Castells,[405] another conclusion can be deduced. The church can be criticised for coming late to the party of informational technology exploitation in its work. Rather like the General Synod members who felt an aversion to bureaucratic methods of accountability, so the church was reticent to engage in the use of the new technologies because it might isolate parts of their worshipping communities. The stipendiary clergy were slow to adopt the technology in their leadership and ministry roles, perhaps because of a deep sense that IT was not an appropriate tool for their work. Perhaps it was thought that IT could not capture the depth and significance of the material that the church was working with or indeed, was unholy

[405] (Castells 1996)

and contaminated. They were not alone in this as other professions made similar arguments; the NHS being a case in point with recurrent debates about the holy grail of confidentiality of patient records. More significantly, but perhaps unconsciously, there was aversion to what was felt to be the individualisation of communication in an institution that saw its call to be working in community, especially a geographically defined community. This tension is resolving as the church becomes more comfortable with the potential of such technology revealed in the number of church websites and web-based resources. However, the church is still not comfortable with how community has been redefining itself, especially as that community is highly selective and individualistic about the geographic locations it uses, be that for work, leisure, restaurants, or even churches. MSEs are embedded in this culture and therefore the next conclusion is that as a group of priests that are not institutionally integrated but who are culturally embedded, MSEs represent a different kind of priestly presence with different expectations and alternative ways of achieving them; they have the capacity to turn what is perceived as unholy into holy places where the new communities are emerging.

As experts in this evolving community where communication is central and every facet of life is touched by the impact of IT, MSEs have come to terms with the evidence-demanding, objective-driven, governance-sensitive, world. This world is, if not evidence-based, then at least evidence aware. Decisions are not reached and agreed without debate about the available evidence, contributed to by the people who are informed and not only those of appropriate status. What drives such debates is access to data, and that is achieved through the use of IT. A further observation therefore is that the trajectory of MSEs and their subsequent evolution in the church has not been driven by the systematic collection or examination of evidence. The establishment of the role had strong theological drivers emerging from the understanding of God's Kingdom on earth. MSEs are expert in this jargon-filled, bureaucratic world as well as in the requirements of church life. Kingdom theology incorporates both the notion of work as on-going incarnation as well as including all the untidiness of life. It has a hiddenness, an

indirectness which reflects much of the gospel message. Despite MSEs being skilled in working in both environments and all the benefits in mission that could bring if utilised as a central driver in structuring the clerical workforce, the concern of the church has remained more pragmatic concerns about the fall in the numbers of people presenting themselves for stipendiary ministry. Subsequent studies have been *ad hoc* events driven by either the need for better utilisation of this resource at parish level, or concerns about how to hold such MSEs accountable.[406],[407],[408] As of 2012, the Church of England did not hold data about the number of MSEs licensed or ordained. An unknown number of dioceses hold data about such priests locally and then only usually where a dean with responsibility for the oversight of MSEs has been appointed. One is forced to conclude that while the role exists and is welcomed, a rational plan for its development and utilisation does not exist.

Examination of the history of Ministry in Secular Employment with the aid of the study archive leads to another element of the emergent ecclesiology, concerning a lack of clarity about the interrelatedness of three management concepts: accountability, responsibility and authority, and the implications of management as a process in the church. In addressing the importance of achieving clarification of these three functions in health care leadership in relation to individual roles and team activities, and how this determines organisational values and vision, the following questions were asked:

- From where does the authority come in this situation?
- How will I/we be held accountable?
- To whom or for whom am I/we responsible? (Keighley 1998 pp 235-39)[409]

These three simple questions can rapidly unravel how individuals work and what the nature of the organisation's culture is. When applied to MSE development, it is

[406] (Advisory Board of Ministry 1994)
[407] (Vaughan 1998)
[408] (Morgan 2013)
[409] (Keighley 1998)

clear that the bishops involved in initiating training, ordaining and licensing believed that they had the authority to do this and were treated by peers as if they did indeed have such authority. At no point in this study has any question been raised about the bishops' authority to do this or, conversely, not to support MSE. The question about responsibility (above) therefore makes clear the degree of independence that bishops have. While bishops are responsible for their dioceses, there is little extant process to hold bishops managerially accountable, whatever their ethical obligations might be. These questions therefore suggest an arm's length organisational structure whose detailed actions can occur with minimal external supervision or processes of accountability.

The MSE story therefore demonstrates what happens when years of lobbying for a change like MSE and social changes come together in the church. Decisions can be made, as with MSE, without any detailed examination of the wider corporate impact or the implications for individuals. Such decision-making is based on whether or not the activity in some way crosses the traditional norms. When a decision does cross those traditional norms, as in the case of MSEs or women priests, the focus is on how to maintain stability with the minimum of organisational disturbance in the church, not on how this will impact on the current vision or develop the potential for delivery of the mission in the future. In management terms the reservations to this style of organisational process were well laid out by Budde:

> *Not surprisingly, conventional organizational and management theory is more compatible with ecclesiologies that de-emphasize the special nature of the church, and in fact seem to reinforce trends that minimize the church as part of God's revelatory action in the world.* (Budde 2008 p. 110)[410]

In Budde's terms, the perceptions of MSEs about the bishops' inadequate management is a reflection of an ecclesiology that is focused on the non-institutional aspects of faith life. While the institutional church, represented by its stipendiary priests, sees the action of God in the world as primarily redemptive

[410] (Budde 2008)

through institutionalised sacramental graces, MSEs tend to come from a more incarnational perspective, seeing salvation in working towards the delivery of God's intended creation. Both are essential doctrines of the church, but lead to very different perspectives if considered independently. The bishops therefore have not acted outside their authority in the way that MSE has, or has not, been developed. Equally, they have not acted beyond the matters that they are properly responsible for. However, the lack of accountability processes means that the decision-making has no organisational ownership, especially from the normative parish priests, cannot be challenged from the perspective of use of resources, especially the very human resources that MSE represents, and can act without the transparency and public governance protocols required in every other field of public life. Ecclesiologically, it paints a picture of well-intentioned individuals following the traditional ways of working but immune from the public culture. While this was seen as a positive when seeking to establish MSE in that progress could be made without the delay of achieving general agreement on establishment of the role, selection and training of individuals, and most importantly agreement on the role and its placement in the institution, over time it has become clear that the MSE role has therefore been moved to the margins of the institution of the church and then become the victim of the idiosyncratic decision-making of the bishops with little or no 'buy-in' from the rest of the institution. In consequence, the development of MSE is one that demonstrates the homeostatic nature of the church's decision-making.

8.4 Workforce

While it is not technically correct to describe stipendiary priests as a workforce because they are not salaried, this is often the approach taken. The analysis of the available data used in this study pointed to the continuing decline in stipendiary priest numbers. This is expected to continue because of the aging profile of the stipendiary clergy. The shortage caused by this decline is being addressed with active recruitment in dioceses through vocations events and an increased number of courses to educate active Christians about their faith and therefore raise in them

an enhanced awareness of a possible priestly vocation in themselves or others. An attempt is also underway to encourage younger candidates to the priesthood, to address the aging priestly workforce. Into this mix comes the fact that the numbers of NSMs and among them MSEs, continue to grow. This means that the church is faced with a re-profiling of available clergy with those who are unpaid far exceeding those who are paid. However, the General Synod paper quoted above includes this illuminating comment:

> *The continuing decline in stipendiary clergy numbers was requiring a re-shaping of ministry e.g. the further extension of team ministry, including the exploration of the Minster model, and the development of pioneer ministry. Non-stipendiary and lay ministry were of increasing importance, although a few delegates expressed concern that non-stipendiary ministers were not a like for like replacement for stipendiary clergy. But others talked of the strength of NSMs in terms of their engagement with local communities.* (General Synod 2009a p. 2)[411]

The tension identified by Hodge in 1983[412] about the comparative natures of parochially and non-parochially-based clergy is still present in this quote, nearly forty years on. While some contributors to the reported debate liked NSMs because of their community links, the point was made that such priests are not like stipendiary clergy. NSMs were still only 'of increasing importance' and their strength is to do with 'engagement' with the local community, not the fact that they had originated from it and were embedded in it.

This reveals the important insight that stipendiary clergy are somewhat distant from, or distinct to, their local community. Also, the report did not explore what a local community is, given the challenges to this term arising from the changes in social structure and culture. It is significant that the description of the NSMs role is thin, especially in the light of what comes next:

> *Several delegates commented on the changing role of stipendiary clergy, who increasingly worked in and led teams of non-stipendiary clergy and lay ministers. This had implications*

[411] (General Synod of the the Church of England 2009a)
[412] (Hodge 1983b)

> *for their training. The quality of leadership was identified as a vital issue for the Church.* (General Synod 2009a p. 2)[413]

The automatic assumption is that not only are new forms of ministry needed, but in neither of the quotations above are MSEs mentioned among a number of other developments and sources of ministerial provision. From the MSE's perspective, the reference to quality of leadership while excluding the MSE's contribution is ironic, given that a large proportion of them are in leadership positions and have been trained in leadership by the organisations in which they work. The quotation is an example of the church wishing to reconstruct a wheel that it already has. In planning an ecclesiology for the future which maximised the inbuilt capacity of the ordained 'workforce' teams led by MSEs and NSMs with appropriate leadership skills and knowledge, supported by stipendiary clergy where necessary should be considered, to invert current practice and expectation and shift the focus of the church into the new form of community life. A fair conclusion is that when considering its available workforce, the Church of England does not recognise leadership capacity or potential outside the stipendiary clergy framework.

This seeming blind spot in the church is to do with many factors, but especially with assumed power. The bishops' role in terms of accountability was mentioned above, but here the issue is more the assumed power of the stipendiary parish priests. Rather like the bishops, the incumbents have independence and authority embedded in the position itself. Although the authority of the position is given through the bishop's license, it remains difficult to hold a parish priest to account and though this has been changing in recent years, for the period of this study it held true. The position perceived by many stipendiary priests as 'stewards of God's mysteries'[414] gives an authority that can perhaps only be competently challenged by a more senior cleric. MSEs, the adequacy of whose training is questioned, are not only perceived as second class priests in this regard, but are seen as junior to parish priests in the hierarchical organisation. The archive

[413] (General Synod of the the Church of England 2009a)
[414] (Allan et al. 1993)

demonstrates however, that MSEs go to some length to avoid challenging the *status quo*. Concerning the workforce therefore, it is fair to conclude that despite affirmations to the contrary, MSEs are not perceived by the institution of the church to be the equivalent of the parish priest in the geographic setting of the parish.

Morgan's[415,416] research picks up on this theme of NSMs/MSEs being second class priests and includes many of the old chestnuts explored in previous reports and reviews. The emphasis on 'Mobilising an under-used resource', the title used in *Church Times*[417] to describe Morgan's work, leaves little to the imagination about the approach taken by both the researcher and the paper's editorial team and the underlying drivers. It gives a clear sense that the church has now reached a decision about what approach to take to NSM/MSE. If MSEs and the whole NSM cadre is under-utilised, then certain assumptions about priesthood and ministry are being asserted as: a) priests are only really engaged in their priesthood when involved in the parish and doing what a parish priest does; b) the skills and aptitudes of a priest are those of the parish priest (re-enforced by post-ordination training content during the study period); c) when priests are away from the parish, they are 'wasting' their time, i.e. are under-utilised. These are demeaning indictments at both a personal and organisational level. They suggest ecclesiologically, that this cadre of priests has been allowed to develop without proper supervision or direction and that there has been a severe lack of planning about how to utilise their skills and time. Put another way, no needs analysis has been undertaken by which to compare the ordained ministerial requirements of the church generally and the possible contribution of MSE in particular. The General Synod paper[418] illustrates this graphically in a debate about the use of the Sheffield formula (the mechanism for allocating resources from the Church Commissioners to dioceses to fund stipendiary ministers). At present there are

[415] (Morgan 2013)
[416] (Morgan 2010)
[417] (Morgan 2013)
[418] (General Synod of the the Church of England 2009a)

significant divergences between dioceses about the provision of stipendiary clergy and NSMs of various types. Each diocese has its own approach and there are not only marked differences, but fundamental disagreements about how to achieve a more equitable spread of stipendiary ministers, even to the degree of separating the supply and availability of ministers from any debate about the numbers of ordained ministers needed for mission. This lack of unanimity – what managers might call a lack of shared corporate purpose – once more seems to come back to the individuality of parameters of exercising authority at diocesan level. How dioceses and even more significantly, the bishop, choose to direct the organisation is key to addressing the understanding of MSE ministry and its position in the church. The problem seems to be that the approach taken to organisational development had become institutionalised, resting on previous practice and assumptions and therefore incapable of envisioning how to utilise the available gifts and charisms (skills and strengths when considered managerially) to reshape the operation of the ordained workforce to meet the needs of the communities as they have evolved since the 1960s.

After reading the archive, what would a new profile for the total clerical workforce look like? The Minster model[419] needs to be explored in this context. The Minster model has become code in the Church of England for the existence of a centralised parish team where several clergy are licensed together and with ordained and lay associated ministers, to create a more diverse and better resourced ministerial setting. The model harks back to the pre-Reformation period when clergy based on the monastic model would share a daily life of prayer while ministering to the wide ranging community, even being away for months at a time to care for more remote and inaccessible settlements. This model becomes attractive when considering MSEs because of the defined nature of the role of MSEs as those who go out to communities not accessible from the parish church itself. The notion of a shared life of prayer is attractive, given the concerns raised about the difficulty of maintaining a spiritual life. The challenge lies in redefining

[419] (General Synod of the the Church of England 2009a)

the nature of parish life in a setting that goes back to an era when geographic communities were both smaller and more dispersed, as well as identifying and developing the leadership capable of such practice. However, it is possible to conclude that the church has within its historic repertoire some concepts and practices that would maximise the role and function of both MSEs and the wider NSM community of ordained priests more effectively than at present.

The question therefore might be, ‘what would lead the church into devising new ministerial supply models and organisational structures?’ The rebalancing of the stipendiary against non-stipendiary ministry, including the remarkable proportion of active retired and licensed clergy, is a significant and necessary driver if the needs of both parochial ministry and the wider mission field are to be met. With many retired clergy still in practice and with the national reviews of the pensionable age, the church needs to reconsider at what point individuals need to retire from ministry. This applies to MSEs as much as any other group of clergy as the age at which people stop working, in contrast to when they receive a pension, increases. One imperative for restructuring church life manifested by the MSE archive is the redefinition of community. Castells[420] pointed to community in the space of flows. The idea of community is difficult to comprehend in any other sense than as a way of communicating and living. During the study period the experience of community changed to exhibiting significant individualism and separation from social agencies other than those chosen by the individual to engage with. The era of dropping in on someone for a chat (the traditional and idealistic view of the work of the parish priest) is gone for the majority of the population whose principal form of social engagement is via new technologies and social media. From the perspective of the church as a missionary and evangelistic organisation, it becomes necessary to devise techniques to be sure that there is a presence in such ‘cyber’ communities. This would lead to a much more dispersed view of what it means to be church as its existence would be as much through the world wide web (a very positive thing

[420] (Castells 1996)

from the perspective of potential mission) as through the physical presence of a priest either in the parish or the work place.

Some evidence of this dispersed church model is beginning to be available. It includes religious material on the web from mainstream churches; shared worship events co-ordinated rather like webinars using the same types of technology; and broadcasting of worship via the web to identified congregants, which is especially useful for housebound people. However, the technological developments have yet to be linked to the capacities and networks of MSEs. Success in any professional field depends on the size of the individual's personal network, and MSEs have such networks within which they act. Acknowledging that MSEs themselves made it clear that they work on the basis of people coming to them rather than they trying to evangelise, this is not a proposal for wholesale replacement of parish life by web-based activities facilitated by MSEs' networks. Rather, exploring the conclusion that the church's failure to engage with MSEs means that the IT networked approach to being church has yet to be thought through and possibilities have to be explored outside of the current parochial frameworks.

MSEs are in the strange position of being representatives of a spatially bound organisation in organisations for whom space as a concrete fact might not even exist as people work from home, hot-desk or are constantly in transit. Equally, they are representatives of the sacred in what is a secular world. This gives them USPs (unique selling points) in both settings. They live a duality that reflects completely the situation of most working Christians. This duality is not shared by the parish priest, which raises questions about the validity of that position; not of the role of leader, but as someone who leads a community without the constraints that the community experiences. From this perspective it is the parish priest who is in the strange position, not the MSEs. The historical pattern of community priests has always been of many if not most priests having to work for a living. The parish work was therefore in reality the priest's individual contribution to the life of the community in much the same way as others organised regular community events

or provided community support. To be something that could be described as a full-time parish priest is a historically recent phenomenon. As the church realises the difficulties it faces because of constraints of income and recruitment, an obvious conclusion is that a move back to a previous model of working might be beneficial, not just in order to address the problems of a fall in income and recruitment. This time, the more virtuous reason for this would mean that the majority of priests were working for a living and therefore sharing the same burdens and challenges as the people of the communities they are part of. This would significantly redefine the ecclesiology of church and parish life; the parish priest would once more be alongside all other Christians not set aside. It would also remove barriers between the perceived holiness of church as set against the contamination and impurity of the secular. Most of all it would address a theological anomaly in a Trinitarian church where the unity of the godhead could once more be reflected in the unity of all church members and ordained ministers in the incarnated world.

Theologically, opening Pandora's Box of the nature of church community possibly without any full-time priests means redefining the church community. A priest abetting the life of the wider community by providing one aspect of the life of that community is part of the tenets of Kingdom theology and therefore rests in the incarnational concerns expressed by MSEs. No longer would the church community be separated from the rest of the community because it met under the leadership of one person appointed to live out a separate role through whom the secular could be redeemed and made holy. It would experience the integration of the community more fully because the parish priest was one of them both in work and residence. Such an approach would challenge concerns about the implicit purity of the separateness of a parish priest from the day-to-day concerns and practices of the people that they live with. A parish priest who was also earning his or her own living would underline the service component of the role and mean that when speaking, it would be as a prophet, talking of what she or he knew, rather than as someone in a pulpit, ten feet above contradiction! The church would not be seen exploring how to speak to the world of work but be speaking from within that

world. Instead of having separate cadres of priests, each with their own arcana and therefore speaking from different theological and spiritual contexts, the ordained clergy would share all that the people in their communities shared. This unity of purpose would enable a proper focus on the incarnational work of all God's people to be incorporated into church life and break any assumption that the secular is unholy.

That such a development has not occurred so far leads to the conclusion that the countervailing pressures are not only strong, but rest on foundations of self-definition that cannot readily be challenged or reviewed. However, by 2013, that was not the case. The diocese of Chelmsford, having carried out a serious human resource analysis, started to appoint MSEs who were still deeply embedded in their careers as house-for-duty priests on the basis that they would continue in their careers. The parishes are being supported in the move to being much more fully lay led. This development begins to enact the suggestion that MSEs become parish priests and other priests are encouraged to work with them in wider teams. For the MSEs, whose material from the archive was used, this was not an option. In 2000, dioceses were going through another round of trying to identify how many MSEs they had and how to 'manage' them because concern about them being semi-detached had once more spread through the episcopate. In the following decade a number of deans were appointed to coordinate the training and oversight of MSEs and some NSMs. This led to better networking and in some instances to participation at the bishops' senior staff meetings. However, those who attended meetings of MSEs and NSMs found them to be more like support groups, as long-standing problems were aired. A general sharing of the sense of neglect and dismissal of what for MSEs was an important vocation that seemed to be well received in the work place and among the parishioners, confirmed them in their roles. Interestingly, in some instances the people appointed to being deans for MSEs and NSMs were not MSEs or NSMs, which simply added to the alienation of the clergy involved and in one instance led to boycotting of meetings (information given in confidence). It would be fair to conclude therefore that the reason for such

appointments was to address the concern identified by Fuller and Vaughan,[421] which was how to hold the individuals accountable. A close reading of the MSE archive suggests, however, that the problem with accountability stems not from their positions in the church but from the way in which bishops and parish priests are themselves established to work, both organisationally and institutionally. As part of any answer about how to maximise the ordained workforce, including MSEs, there will be a need to redefine how ordained roles are exercised. In undertaking such an exercise, greater clarification about the corporate vision and mission of the church might emerge; it would then be more straightforward to identify how these special resources can be properly utilised, supported and developed.

8.5 Loose ends

It is clear that some items of this study need to be reflected on separately. One MSE's account in the archive included an observation about the way in which her diocese operated, which rang true for several others. This concerned the annual ministerial review carried out in many dioceses. The MSE had a similar review in her workplace, also on an annual basis. The content of the reviews overlapped considerably. At first she had explored in both organisations the possibility that the review of the one organisation would be adequate for the purposes of the other. Her employer was happy for a representative from the diocese to be part of the firm's review and to raise any questions her ministerial review might require. The diocese did not think this was acceptable. Consequently, the individual had not only two different lots of documents to prepare and different meetings to attend, she also had no forum in which to integrate her roles publicly. She found this rather disheartening but not surprising. Her equanimity indicated that the behaviour of the diocese was something that she had learnt to live with rather than challenge. An otherwise outstanding priest and business professional's skills and experience were being marginalised by her church, not her employer. This is one loose end: why has the church not sought to establish shared evaluations between

[421] (Fuller & Vaughan 1986b)

employers, MSEs and themselves in order to maximise the impact of the individuals and to support them through training and development? It seems strange to ask an MSE to agree to certain goals in a ministerial review but these are not integrated with the goals and training provision that the individual's employer is considering.

There is an opposite corollary to this, which is equally odd: no evidence came to light in the archive about potential MSEs or their diocese negotiating their change of status either as an ordinand or as a licensed priest with their employer. The individual and the church can be seen as placing themselves in the organisation without any sort of negotiation, consent, request for, or permission given. It is therefore very surprising that there are no regular reports of objection to the move to MSE by employers; only one has been elicited and there had only been discussion at a very low level in his organisation. This lack of consultation is perhaps an opportunity lost as some sort of public recognition or agreement would consolidate the role and have the potential to draw the organisation more into the life of the church, and the church more visibly into the world of work. Both of these accounts point to the independence that the church perceives as having in making its public decisions, which an ecumenically minded Methodist minister and friend described as 'Anglican arrogance'. Whether it is fair to describe it as arrogance is a moot point; either way it underlines a degree of self-certainty that does not automatically think of being inclusive and transparent, or seeing the need for consultation with organisations and people outside of its immediate remit. If however the notion of Anglican arrogance is not dismissed, this is evidence that the church dismisses the need to talk with others and therefore to some degree, belittles what other organisations do.

The lack of a structured approach to MSEs is a key observation. From the 1990s onwards role descriptions for MSEs began to appear, which described hours of service given to a parish, annual leave to be taken, and what events the individual would be expected to attend (meetings with parish priest, parish committees etc.).

It was with the introduction of the Ecclesiastical Offices Measure in 2009[422] that it became an expectation that something resembling a job description should be agreed with every licensed minister. This process highlighted the lack of appropriate structure for MSEs and to a lesser degree NSMs. Such ministers are by definition volunteers and therefore have a much looser organisational relationship than stipendiary ministers. However, it is right to lay behavioural expectations on volunteers, but problems have arisen because MSEs have not been involved in drawing up the details of these 'statements of particulars' and consequently the opportunity to agree to relevant particulars has been lost. This is another opportunity to integrate MSEs that has been missed.

In the archive there is little to point to MSEs seeing themselves as part of the profound cultural change that has occurred from the 1960s onward. Marwick[423] identified the mass of sociological changes that emerged in the 1960s and that continued to shape society. Castells'[424] work explained the underpinning of many of these changes in terms of technology that has enabled the changes to happen. Beckford described the relationship as:

> *It makes very little sense, in my view, to think of religion as an object or a subject that could exist independently of human actors and social institutions. Religion does not 'do' anything by itself. It does not have agency. Rather, it is an interpretive category that human beings apply to a wide variety of phenomena, most of which have to do with notions of ultimate meaning or value. The sedimented meanings associated with religion in the course of social life constitute authoritative guides not only to usage of the term but also to social action. The category of 'religion' is an abstraction from, or distillation of, these meanings or actions. As such, the category of religion is subject to constant negotiation and re-negotiation. Its meaning must therefore be related to the social contexts in which it is used.* (Beckford 2003 p. 4)[425]

However, as Tanner explained:

[422] (General Synod of the the Church of England 2009b)
[423] (Marwick 1998)
[424] (Castells 1996)
[425] (Beckford 2003)

> *... culture in action, the conflict-ridden, confused twists and turns of real-life situations, ...*
> (Tanner 1997 p. 39)[426]

In these terms, MSEs were deeply embedded in the cultural change, recording the reshaped forms of interpersonal relationships that indicated a greater sense of individualism and access to consumables unknown to their parents. The archive spans the era from when transistor radios were the wonder of the age through to hand sized mobile phones and laptops with Wi-Fi. However, the MSEs' comments and records show a focus on the particular rather than taking a broader sweep of the new ways of life and the rise of their type of ministry. The lack of structured research around the development of the MSE role means that the implications of the role had not been properly charted. However, this study has concluded that they were part of the response of the church to this cultural change, even if both parties did not think about it in these terms at the time. The failure to integrate MSE and maximise its potential means that the church has lost an authoritative voice needed to explore and give meaning to such cultural changes and its associated symbols.

A final loose end is the question of how, as a body, MSEs should be present in the church. Ramsey's[427] prescient observation about them becoming a religious order with a rule of life was raised with some MSE ordinands when visiting the rest home and retreat centre for the *prêtres ouvriers*, more correctly known as the *Mission de France* in Arras. The priests there were very interested in the Anglican Church's developments in this field and asked about a rule of life and obedience to the bishop reflected in a type of order, if a tertiary one, rather than a habited and celibate structure. Their own reflections about their ministry were about engagement with poor and marginalised people and work in the fields of manual labour. The priests told of the difficulties of maintaining their prayer life and their gratitude for shared time together in prayer and worship when that was possible.

[426] (Tanner 1997)
[427] (Ramsey 1960)

They too had felt that no-one had understood them and had been surprised when they had been allowed to continue their work after the Second Vatican Council. Given the knowledge and experience that Mantle[428] had of the French worker priest movement, it is surprising that the move to enclose MSEs in an order was not recommended by him and never developed further.

These loose ends point to some of the lacunae in the archive. As this study has progressed, it became apparent that there is information that needs to be gathered to answer some of these questions. However, the absence of the information points to the realities of the life that MSEs have lived. The bigger questions are ecclesiological ones, about why the church as an institution has not pursued these issues. The lack of 'interest' indicates something about the nature of the institution, which is revealing of its ecclesiology and of its own internal culture.

8.6 Questions arising for future research

Constraints of time and length of the dissertation mean that in the course of the study interesting areas for further research and study had to be set aside. For example, it has not been possible to undertake a comprehensive review of the MSE numbers. Neither has it been possible to establish a picture, diocese by diocese, of how MSE is received and placed in the portfolio of ordained ministries. There is therefore a whole field of work to determine data on MSE across the Church of England. There would be grounds therefore for a quantitatively stronger study in this field to enhance the rich narrative provided by the archive.

The depth and richness of the archive gives the sense that this exercise has only skimmed the surface of the possible lines of analysis. The use of a more strongly based practical theology approach would have enabled the interrelationship between the theory behind MSE and the practical, applied aspects of religion and religious practice to be explored. It would also be possible, using semiotics to

[428] (Mantle 2000)

examine the material gathered in terms of symbolic and implicit meanings in the text. These approaches would enrich the understanding of the archive further.

The story of MSE and its context has been constantly added to as word of the study spread and people who had kept a record of their own ministry, or been the keepers of data from previous studies, have forwarded material. This has produced a burden of trust to try and manage this research material in the future in terms of where to site it to make it more available and to capture the commitment and concern reflected in passing on the material. The possibility of establishing a library-based archive of this material has already been raised by the Maughan Library at Kings College London. There is clearly a need to publish about the material and the establishment of *Ecclesial Practices. Journal of Ecclesiology and Ethnography* will assist in this field, but the challenge remains of how to share these findings with other readerships, which may not be automatically sympathetic to the study methodology, or indeed the area of study.

It has also become clear that it would have been possible to use this subject as a rationale for a deeper study of how culture influences ecclesiologies. A very clear sense has emerged as the study progressed that the period from 1960 to 2000 was part of a longer trend of ecclesial change in response to the surrounding culture. A more useful time span might have been from the late Victorian era onwards, when there was no question that the church was one of the key national institutions. Within such a timescale it may have been possible to track a process of change that moved from church as institution to the 1960s when the church took on the shape of a denomination, through to the turn of the twenty-first century, when it became possible to see that the church is less an institution and more an organisation when observing and trying to analyse its behaviours.

The study therefore has opened up the possibility of several rich veins of further investigation in the field of MSE and ecclesiology. It would also relate to studies in the sociology of religion and the other major church developments of the era, in

particular, women priests, and sexuality. Historians of the era have barely touched on this subject, and there would be value in examining the nature of the portrayal of the church in this period to strengthen the contextualisation of the study. This research has therefore often skated between associated fields of study, all of which would add to the subject in different ways.

8.7 Conclusions

This research study rests heavily in the work of Vaughan in two ways. His history of the development of NSMs[429] was supplemented with the sharing of a number of tapes on which were the untranscribed interviews undertaken by him and Fuller that were drawn upon to produce their text *Working for the Kingdom.*[430] It was in the process of transcribing the usable tapes that it became clear that these were a potential base for a much larger archive about what had happened after the NSMs were first established, and in particular with that sub-group identified as MSEs. The collation of the archive began to identify a number of gaps in the knowledge about this group. Perhaps significantly, many parts of the archive were not actively sought out, but were forwarded as word spread about the study. Smaller pieces of work from dioceses were provided, as were the raw data of other individuals' studies. The journal CHRISM was a major resource as quarter by quarter, accounts of MSE ministry are published. This collection of materials combined with the feelings elicited in subsequent interviews I carried out indicated an emotional reservoir of further untapped feelings that were finally being accessed and released.

From the very beginning of this study it was clear that aspects of Kingdom theology - thinking of doing God's work in the world, continuing the work of the incarnation, being engaged in the holy secular environment - were central. Another key issue was the era of the development of NSM and MSE. While it had been negotiated for the previous sixty or seventy years, it had bloomed in the 1960s.The

[429] (Vaughan 1990)
[430] (Fuller & Vaughan 1986b)

movement was in many ways a ‘Flower Power Child’, reflective of that individualism and the discovery of new personal freedoms. The tension that was apparent from the start was the normative position of the parish as set against the work-based ministry of these new types of priests. It was not apparent until well into the study how important the recognition of the normative nature of the parish was to be. The nature of the parish related to the separation of the normative priest from the world of work where a large proportion of the population spend their time. The understanding of the position of the parish and the parish priest pointed to the traditional social difference between the parish priests and most of the parishioners they would care for. This transition was to occur during a period of massive social change in English history in which the society became increasingly secular.

Given the degree of change captured by commentators and historians in the 1960s, it was important to choose a particular lens that enabled the archive to be examined in a multi-faceted way. Castells, the social geographer, had been examining change from an urban perspective from 1972 onwards,[431] charting in particular the changing nature of city life and the significance of communication technology as it continued to develop in the post-war period. His insights into how city life and the world of work had become much more controlled and controllable, and then with his thesis of the ‘space of flows’ it became possible to contrast the life style and calling of MSEs and the parish priest and the associated life of the church community. Foucault’s[432] insights on the nature of power and the use of knowledge supplemented this. The understanding of the role of the parish priest and the contrast with that of the MSE revealed a significant mismatch in decision-making approaches and therefore expectations of each other between MSEs, parish priests and bishops.

[431] (Castells 1972)
[432] (Foucault 1966)

The analysis of the archive revealed the range and depth of the lived experience of MSEs. The issue of who gives identity to a role was revealed as being significant for MSEs whose accounts were examined under the headings of Church, Priesthood, and Parish. While it was apparent that the MSEs were talking about the same organisation as their parochial colleagues, the first indications came to light that there were different views about the organisation, which suggested different visions of what the individuals were being called to. Castells'[433] lens enabled a focus on how the geography varied from a parish perspective when compared with the geography of the MSEs'. One was firmly placed while the other was more fluid and difficult to define. This played out most significantly in terms of the experience of work, and indeed what work might actually mean.

In deconstructing the findings from the archive, the effect of the post-modern era on knowledge and understanding was not ignored. Self and secularism were significant issues to emerge. These led to a more detailed assessment of what the archive revealed about the MSEs' experiences of the institution of the church in contrast to the organisation. Ecclesiological outcomes were sought, using the analogy of the human body throughout the study, as a way of exploring how the institution works. This led to the conclusion that authority, accountability and responsibility as key concepts in the understanding of how any organisation works, do not apply in the same way in the institution of the church, because the authority implicit in the roles of bishops and parish priests is not shared by NSMs and MSEs in particular.

In summary, the study has examined different aspects of evidence through different crystal lenses, which could shatter the initial external appearance. The overall conclusion is that the MSE initiative was an example of how the Church of England responded with a reflex in the first instance to changes going on around it and agreed the institution of a non-parochial priest. However, from that point on it has handled MSEs homeostatically, making small adjustments to include them,

[433] (Castells 1996)

but without examining the broader significance of the overall development of the model. This study argues that the significance of MSE is that as the social framework changed in the 1960s, a uniquely appropriate type of priesthood emerged. Because the church does not understand the significance of the social and wider cultural changes, its adherence to the parish model means that the MSE developments have not been used to best purpose. In consequence, many MSEs feel on the outside of the church, not just on its edge, and are concerned about why that has happened.

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